

Anthroposophy and Sleep Paralysis

A compendium of works by Rudolf Steiner



Selections, summaries and comments by

Stephen D Evans

(an accidental spiritual scientist)

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Foreword

Some select quotes from Rudolf Steiner's book titled, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, originally written for his German audience in 1904:

Chapter VII: The Transformation of Dream Life

[The student's] dreams, hitherto confused and haphazard, now begin to assume a more regular character. Their pictures begin to succeed each other in sensible connection, like the thoughts and ideas of daily life....expressing things and events of another world.... mentally controlled and supervised like the impressions and conceptions of waking consciousness. The difference between dream and waking consciousness grows ever smaller. The dreamer remains awake in the fullest sense of the word during his dream life; that is, he is aware of his mastery and control over his own vivid mental activity.... Now, when the gate of the senses is closed during sleep, these other impressions begin to emerge confusedly, and the dreamer becomes aware of experiences in another world

Chapter VIII: The Continuity of Consciousness

Human life runs its course in three alternating states or conditions, namely, waking, dreaming sleep, and dreamless sleep.... For spiritual science, however, dreams have an independent significance apart from the other two conditions....

If the student continues his exercises ... [a radical transformation also] extends to ... deep dreamless sleep. Isolated conscious experiences begin to interrupt the complete insensibility of this deep sleep. Perceptions previously unknown to him emerge from the pervading darkness of sleep.

[W]hen the body rests in as far as its activity is dependent on [harsh and powerful] sense perception, the activity of the higher soul, at first so delicate and inconspicuous, can come into evidence.... [T]he student experiences an ever increasing extension and expansion of consciousness during sleep. The unconscious intervals during sleep-life grow ever smaller, while more and more experiences emerge from erstwhile unconsciousness.

When his body rests, man lives in surroundings which are just as real as those of his waking daily life. It is needless to say that the reality during sleep is different from physical reality surrounding the physical body. The student learns—indeed he must learn if he is to retain a firm footing in the physical world and not become a visionary—to connect the higher experiences of sleep with his physical environment. At first, however, the world entered during sleep is a completely new revelation. This important stage of development, at which consciousness is retained in the life during sleep, is known in spiritual science as the *continuity of consciousness*.... Anyone having reached this stage does not cease experiencing and learning during those intervals when the physical body

rests, and when the soul receives no impressions through the instrumentality of senses.

IX: The Splitting of the Human Personality During Spiritual Training

During sleep no impressions are conveyed to the human soul through the instrumentality of the physical sense-organs. The impressions from the ordinary outer world do not find their way to the soul when in that condition.

In certain respects the soul [during sleep] is actually outside the [physical body] The soul is then only connected with the finer bodies.... The soul is in full activity during sleep, but we can know nothing of this activity so long as we have no spiritual organs of perception through which to observe what is going on around us and see what we ourselves are doing during sleep, [just] as we observe our daily physical environment with our ordinary senses.... Now if, as a result of esoteric training, the student's life during sleep is transformed ... he will be able to follow consciously everything going on around him. He can at will find his way in his environment as he could, when awake, with his ordinary senses.

[D]angers only arise when the necessary precautions are neglected. If all the measures counseled by true esoteric science are adopted, the ascent will indeed ensue through experiences surpassing in power and magnitude everything the boldest flights of sense-bound fantasy can picture; and yet there can be no question of injury to health or life. The student meets with horrible powers threatening life at every turn and from every side. It will even be possible for him to make use of certain forces and beings existing beyond physical perception, and the temptation is great to control these forces for the furtherance of personal and forbidden interests, or to employ them wrongly out of a deficient knowledge of the higher worlds. Some of these especially important experiences, for instance, the meeting with Guardian of the Threshold, will be described....

X: The Guardian of the Threshold

The important experiences marking the student's ascent into the higher worlds include his meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold ... a sovereign being.

A truly terrible spectral being confronts [the student], and he will need all the presence of mind and faith in the security of his path which he has had ample opportunity to acquire in the course of his previous training [This is] an experience of the highest possible reality....

The Guardian must warn him not to go a step further unless he feels in himself the strength to fulfill [its] demands.... However horrible the form assumed by the Guardian The student's preparation must aim at enabling him to endure the terrible sight without a trace of timidity and, at the moment of the meeting,

to feel his strength so increased that he can undertake fully conscious the responsibility for transforming and beautifying the Guardian.

Without preparation, no one could endure the sight.... [But when the student finds the necessary strength to venture past the Guardian], His experience at the Threshold will then be attended by ... the feeling of a new freedom outweighing all other feelings....

Steiner displays a profound understanding of sleep, dreaming and consciousness. He describes human nature as composed of four members, one being our physical body and the others spiritual. Only our ego, that member enabling self-consciousness, does not require any kind of sense-body to maintain consciousness. However, since the ego is typically so bound to the physical senses during waking hours, it sinks into unconsciousness during sleep.

But it does not have to be so. Other members of our being have senses also, though dormant and undeveloped in most people. Dreaming is evidenced by a dim consciousness, not the sharp, vivid self-consciousness of daytime. Some people, either by special training or by accident, do experience brief awakenings of their consciousness during sleep when awareness of nonmaterial things is first illuminated. And this is where some of Steiner's descriptions resonate with the experience of *Awareness during Sleep Paralysis* (ASP) or *Lucid Dreaming* (LD).

More excerpts, these from another of Steiner's principle works titled, *An Outline of Esoteric Science*:

Chapter III. Sleep and Death

An entirely new state of consciousness begins for the ego . . . [where] now, as it were, a world flows from within . . . The ego is enabled to perceive itself [unveiled by the sense world] in its innermost sanctuary.

This revelation . . . is as though dark demoniacal shadows, arising out of the passions . . . intermingle with a blissful world . . . [They are] not mere shadows, but actual entities . . . Creatures appear like distortions and caricatures of what the human being previously knew through sense-perception . . . beings whose appearance for the spiritual eye can be horrible and painful, whose pleasure seems to be destruction and whose passion is bent upon a spiritual evil. [By] comparison . . . the evil of the sense world appears insignificant. The passions indicated, which human beings bring into this [spirit] world, appear to these

creatures as food by means of which their power receives constant strengthening.

[These creatures intend to effect] the destruction of the [human] ego when it gives them nourishment . . . [that is], if the ego seeks a gratification that serves to destroy its own nature, not to maintain and further it . . . Beings exist who are nourished by desires and passions that are worse than any animal passions, because they do not have their being in the sense world, but seize upon the spiritual and drag it down into the realm of the senses . . . The destructive forces of these beings exceed immeasurably all destructive fury existing in the visible animal world.

Chapter V. Cognition of the Higher Worlds--Initiation

Man acquires a knowledge of higher worlds if he develops a third soul state besides sleep and waking . . . Imagine that the soul might be able during sleep to become conscious despite the exclusion of all sense-impressions . . . Would the soul, in that case, find itself in a state of nothingness? The soul, in regard to the ordinary outer world, would then find itself in a state similar to sleep, and yet it would not be asleep, but, as in the waking state, it would confront a real world. Spiritual science is the result of research in just such a state of consciousness.

The means of initiation lead from the ordinary state of waking consciousness into a soul activity, through which spiritual organs of observation are employed. These organs are present in the soul in a germinal state; they must be developed. — It may happen that a human being at a certain moment in the course of his life, without special preparation, makes the discovery in his soul that such higher organs have developed in him. This has come about as a sort of involuntary self-awakening . . . There are but few cases in which such a person, prior to self-initiation, is not compelled to pass through the most varied, crooked and useless byways. Training spares him these deviations. It leads straight forward.

On the one hand it resembles [unconscious sleep], on the other it is the complete opposite. It is a sleep that represents, in regard to everyday consciousness, a higher waking state . . . Although this soul state may be compared with sleep in regard to the liberation from the body, yet it may be described as an enhanced waking state when compared with everyday waking consciousness . . . The first thing that the human being experiences on this path is such a liberation from the physical organs. He may then say to himself, "My consciousness is not extinguished when I disregard the sense-perceptions and ordinary intellectual thinking; I can lift myself out of them and then feel myself as a being alongside the [self] I was previously."

This is the first purely spiritual experience: the observation of a soul-spirit ego being. This, as a new Self, has lifted itself out of the self that is only bound to

the physical senses and the physical intellect . . . At first it perceives itself in the world of pictures — imaginations.

Although these pictures appear as living in a new world, the soul must recognize that they are, at the outset, nothing but the reflection of its own being. But [the soul] must also have developed such a power of will that it can extinguish, can eliminate these pictures from consciousness at any time. The soul must be able to act within these pictures completely free and fully aware . . . Only after having acquired the ability to bring about this extinction does the student approach the true external spiritual world . . . From the self-perception he then must proceed to an observation of an outer world of soul and spirit.

What the soul at the beginning cannot achieve in the waking state on account of the disturbances of the physical world, is possible in the state of sleep . . . He will feel that during sleep he does not "fall into a complete slumber," but that at times his soul is active in a certain way while sleeping . . . The soul frees itself during sleep from unconsciousness and feels the world of soul and spirit . . . or he may have the memory on awaking that he has been in another world. The *continuity of consciousness during sleep*: [This does not mean], however, that man is always conscious during sleep . . . It is not at all desirable that a result be hastened. For this result might easily be only the smallest part of what should actually appear. What we may have gained by having "peered" into the spirit world is only an illusion, for this "peering" cannot furnish the truth, but only a mirage . . . Every man in every situation — even in the poorest surroundings — may have sufficient experiences if he only keeps his mind sufficiently receptive. One need not seek the experiences; they are present everywhere.

The impressions [received] from [the spiritual] world still resemble in many ways those of the physical-sensory world. But he is aware that these perceptions in the imaginative world express something quite different from sense reality. He recognizes that behind them stand non-physical material . . . The human being who is accustomed to have his inner life determined by outer impressions immediately finds himself uncertain and wavering when he has to unfold a soul-life that has discarded all connection with outer impressions.

[Soul-spirit beings] now stand before him as an outer world, just as in the physical realm stones, plants, and animals stood before his senses . . . A plant in the world of the senses remains just as it is, whatever the human soul may feel or think about it. With the images of the world of soul and spirit this is, at the outset, not the case. [These images] alter according to what the human being feels or thinks. In this way he gives them form that depends upon his own nature . . . Although real beings confront him, he does not see them, but instead, his own creation [as imaginative representations]. Thus he may have something true before him and, nevertheless, see something false.

It may happen that the student encounters the higher world before he possesses the necessary inner faculties . . . to recognize that world in its true shape . . . to distinguish between what he carries over as projections of himself into things and what they are in reality . . . One [even] perceives one's own being as an image in itself . . . [This] Doppelganger [Double] effect is such that he becomes [initially] invisible through the feeling of shame characterized when man approaches the world of soul and spirit. As a result of this [shame], he conceals the entire [spiritual] world also. Like a "guardian" he stands there before that world, in order to deny entrance to those who are not truly capable of entering.

If, without encountering the "guardian of the threshold," man were to enter the world of soul and spirit, he might fall prey to deception after deception. For he would never be able to distinguish between what he himself has carried over into that world and what in reality belongs to it. A proper training must lead the student of spiritual science into the realm of truth only, not into the realm of illusion.

Soul-power, as described above, having shaped itself into an independent principle . . . is [in a way] nothing else but the Doppelganger, the "guardian of the threshold" himself, and this principle sets the student of the spiritual a special task. He has to direct and lead with his newborn Self what he is in his ordinary self and which appears to him in an image. A sort of battle against the Doppelganger will result. The latter will constantly strive for supremacy. To establish the right relationship to this Doppelganger and not permit him to do anything that is not under the influence of the newborn ego-- this strengthens and fortifies man's powers.

If, because of incorrect spiritual training, a person were to enter upon this experience unprepared, then, in the encounter with the "greater guardian of the threshold," something would pour into his soul that only can be compared to the "feeling of immeasurable horror," of "boundless fear." The "guardian of the threshold" will assume, to a certain degree, an individual shape for each human being.

Obviously, this won't be for everybody. Steiner's writings have been very helpful to me, coming to terms with the horror and strangeness of recurring ASP and LD. I offer this study freely in the hope it may improve accessibility to otherwise difficult or obscure readings. Some ASP sufferers may find within Steiner's worldview good reason for courage to face the unknown. Modern research in every science -- astronomy, physics, biology, genetics -- is continually challenging all previous accepted or assumed barriers in cosmology. Ours is a far bigger and stranger universe (inner and outer) than strictly Newtonian models of matter would allow. I fully expect my lifetime to reveal

ancient spiritualistic language and more recent terms of quantum physics to be describing the same super-material facts. There was a time when the scientific establishment declared reports of blurred microscopic observations to be lies or illusion or imagination. And I suspect that ASP and other lucid dream experiences are actually hiccups of a further awakening consciousness, perceiving --however blurred or distorted-- dimensions of reality underlying material appearances. After all, our conscious awareness is the very first tool and condition of inquiry in any environment.

Introduction

This set of writings is to be presented as a continuing study; I will keep adding more as I am able to re-read the books and lectures of Steiner from the standpoint of one having struggled for over 25 years of adult life with a sleep conundrum recently termed A.S.P.*

I was led to pursue study of Steiner's life and teaching as a sort of therapy, hoping thereby to overcome the terror and confusion of recurring ASP during adolescent years. As a late teen, I had been striving to reconcile the experience with my subcultural heritage of Evangelical Pentecostal** Christianity, at a time when that familiar worldview would place me on a collision course with the wider world of secular ideas and values. I initially devoured everything available by and about Rudolf Steiner, though I could understand relatively little. Even so, his experience and ideas appeared to define a world that might actually allow and explain this syndrome, nighttime spells of acute consciousness known lately as *Awareness during Sleep Paralysis* or ASP. Like most sufferers, I little realized back then how common is the experience, even through western history and the modern enlightenment era, though guarded and mythologized. It is now evident (thanks in large part to the Internet) that the community of ASP sojourners crosses all distinctions of history, race, culture, economic class, education, geography, philosophy and religion. Though the regional lore differs in various attempts to explain the phenomena, the actual descriptions of symptoms and observations are remarkably consistent (detailed below*).

I am convinced that many modern traumas of consciousness, about which studies and books and self-appointed experts abound, are in essence the same crisis that prior lore-masters (the psychiatrists of elder days) called the *nightmare* (to distinguish it from merely a bad dream). And so they sought to treat it as a malady, chemically or spiritually in terms of an attack by a devil in the guise of the Old Hag, Incubus or Succubus and even Vampires, Fairies or Monkey Jinn. Alien encounters, recovered (false) memories, near-death experiences, psychedelic drug trips***, lucid dreaming, and various other altered states of consciousness (accidental or induced) all share elements in common with ASP. Police files of certain locales on every continent (as if it were triggered by something in the air or the ground) will be

cluttered with odd cases, unsolvable using standard scientific detective methods. Apparent assault and rape victims swear they have been awakened from sleep and violated repeatedly by man or monster, helpless to resist, often unable even to move or cry out, and sometimes surviving with bruising or claw marks to show authorities. Yet there will be no other physical evidence of invasion. Likewise, the more esoteric branches of most every religion of every age, from the ancient Babylonian Zoroastrians and Jewish prophets to the pre-enlightenment Knights Templar, Rosicrucians, and eastern Buddhist priesthoods, to modern Charismatic Christians or New Age visionaries.

Here, I will attempt to present abstracts and excerpts from Rudolf Steiner's main works as it appears (in my own limited judgement) to illuminate the significance of ASP phenomena in the larger context of human spiritual history and development. It is my contribution to a wider discussion of the mystery of ASP. My concern is not only how it is experienced or of what it is made (chemical, neurological or psychological components) – research on those questions is already underway by others better qualified (lookup <http://www.trionica.com/>). Rather, I want to understand why it happens, why to some and not others, its developmental significance, what it may mean to the individual sufferer and ultimately the family of humanity.

To some, that is an inane concern, like questioning the spiritual significance of good digestion. I don't ask those people to follow this study ... though they may nevertheless find it fascinating. Others will consider this question self-validating (perhaps even in regard to digestion). To them, I humbly open this window to another world of inquiry. They will readily understand –especially those who have also confronted ASP—how it is that I can call myself an accidental spiritual scientist.

Again, comments are my own perspective (separated by *italics*), based admittedly upon my own narrow experience. Some words I have substituted [in brackets] for clarity and **emboldened** others to emphasize select themes. The reader can refer to originals to judge my edits. The volume *Knowledge* is one of Steiner's most readable, so more of his own words are retained from that book. I offer this abridged and annotated version only as a starting place, an introduction. It cannot replace reading and study of the full published works of

Rudolf Steiner (as translated from the original German). To that end, links are provided to online English language versions of the complete texts.

First, consider some definitions to minimize confusion over terms and philosophies. The words *spiritual science* in Steiner's writings and lectures bear no direct relation to Christian Science, Scientology, mysticism or scientism nor other later forms of spiritualism. He was advocating a scientific inquiry of nonmaterial reality (much as quantum physicists and geneticists are attempting today), of which the spiritual human being is the focus and apex –the fully developed human spirit the primary instrument of inquiry. That is why he adopted the name *Anthroposophy*.

Force: This is not the physically measurable motion and mass of mechanical science, rather a living and creating impetus not directly seeable by physical eyes. Its influence on material bodies is observable, however, as physical life processes of growth, regeneration, maturation and reproductive capacity, or rather its decline as disease, deformity, death and decay.

Current: Like *force*, an immaterial reality perceptible spiritually as directional forces serving unified functions, systems or bodies of spiritual activity. Spiritual force is to current as blood pressure is to the circulatory system.

Etheric: The first dimension of nonmaterial reality whose form and forces give rise to the form and life of physical appearances. The human etheric body (also called the form body or life body, or biblically the *life* and the *mantle*) is the totality of spiritual currents and organs underlying formation and regeneration of the physical body. During physical sleep, the etheric body is said to expand and extend beyond the physical form into higher dimensions, wherefrom it restores its regenerative capacity (as evidenced partly by the dream consciousness). Physical death is severance of the etheric from the material body, completed when rigor mortis and decay ensues (for humankind often days after respiration ceases). Etheric objects and entities do not exhibit material form, though to spiritual sight they may appear to show elements of common physical and animal forms.

Astral: This is the next higher dimension of spiritual reality, of which our dreaming reveals a dim, noncontiguous and distorted reflection of its actuality. We experience our astral body during daytime as our character and personality –the private, inner world of thoughts, ideas, ambitions, purpose, preferences, emotional feelings, and lower drives or passions—thus it is also called the soul body. To spiritual perception, the private astral self appears as a public individuality, much as genetic heritage forms a recognizable face and other physical features. However, in the astral community, there is no hiding behind a façade or false expression. The inner is become the outer or shared being. Again, the body inhabited during dreams is a semblance of the actual astral being, thus it may be called the dream body. Animal instinct resides in the astral.

The human astral being is crowned by an even higher reality, the spirit-proper, which a developing individual eventually encounters as his true “I”, ego or higher self. Consciousness in this world is experienced more as a collective *we* than individual *I*. The sense of nationalistic pride or folk soul associated with ancestry and geographic region is a dim reflection of participation in this realm. Christian terminology refers to consciousness of the higher self as the Father and the indwelling Spirit, while the Son, Jesus Christ, was the first to realize this potential.

Aura: This does not refer to the physical radiation that can be seen around a body using certain photographic techniques. The human aura is only perceptible to developed spiritual senses as the etheric and astral bodies surround and permeate the physical form. Forces and currents in these bodies may be described by one having practiced spiritual sight as moving, flowing and flashing patterns of color, depending on the character and mood of the subject.

Seer: One who has followed a path of preparation, spiritual enlightenment and initiation to develop the discipline and knowledge required to awaken development of the spiritual organs of perception.

Initiation: One of various methods of spiritual awakening practiced through history. Depending on the school or priesthood, various consciousness-altering aids were employed, like hallucinogenic drugs, meditations, hypnotic and symbolic rituals, and psycho-physical shock. The latter –such as bloodletting and water baptism—was intended to

induce a near-death-experience and thereby jumpstart the novice's awareness of the spiritual world. Of course, most traditions evolved (or degenerated) so that the different practices themselves became highly ritualized and only symbolically reminiscent of original purpose. The practice of baptism as near-death immersion, for instance, was used more symbolically to introduce the early Christian *way* or path. Its meaning is largely forgotten, though retained in mainline traditions as a mere sprinkling and naming ceremony.

Lotus: A pictorial description of a developing organ of spiritual perception as seen in and by initiates (known as *chakram* in eastern traditions). Each organ displays the form of a flower with multiple pairs of opposing petals joined at the center. Some, even the ancients, have preferred the picture of a wheel because the petals or spokes are perceived in constant motion when the organ becomes active. A distinctive vibration or tone accompanies the organ's activity. Modern initiates might see it as spinning fan blades.

Soul: The nonmaterial individuality of a person, comprised of some etheric and more distinctive astral characteristics. It is that part of a person's being surviving physical death and subject to judgement of the parent or higher self and other guiding parent spirits.

Spirit: The continuous or eternal higher self, again identified more as a We than I. The conscious self of the astral being contributes developmental experience gleaned from the transient physical lifetime (referred to biblically as talents, harvest, fruit, reward and jewels for the crown). Thus the enduring spiritual individuality is being constructed in ever increasing distinction as a spirit man (biblically-- the crown, new name and incorruptible body).

Karma: The self-correcting impulse or motivation resulting from the spirit's judgement of a physical individual's development. Ancient esoteric terminology calls the undifferentiated spirit the *father*, which stands in judgement of the physical incarnated lower being, the *son*. Biblical history tells how the first *adam* --as created by the Elohim (a plurality of Creator Beings, translated Almighty)-- chose a path of self-destruction. Jahwe (the I AM of the Elohim), in a decision of self-sacrifice on behalf of fallen mankind, stepped down to become a son of man in order to be appointed the new faultless prototype Adam. As the

newly qualified chosen or Christ, he thereby redeemed the directive Father potential of humankind.

Steiner acknowledges reincarnation of spirit. However, his worldview --consistent with Judeo-Christian scripture and tradition— observes only the one physical life and judgement for each individual soul. Only those souls who yield their lower self-consciousness to the direction of the New Adam and adopt His Spirit as their higher Father principle will endure to deliver up that lifetime's uniqueness to their own spirit (redeemed fatherhood) as eternal individuality. Studied Christians will recognize this use of terms *karma* and *reincarnation* to be more akin to Christian principles of atonement and resurrection than Hindu, Buddhist or New Age ideas. The most obvious biblical example is John the Baptist. Though not conscious himself of the heritage, Jesus Christ recognized in John the reincarnation of the spirit of ancient prophet Elijah.

* The typical ASP episode involves awakening to immobility, feeling stuck or trapped. Sometimes there is also desperate inability to breathe, as if the weight of something or someone were pressuring one's chest or constricting the throat. There is often the sense of a tangible presence of some other person or entity stalking or waiting for the sufferer's struggles to cease. This other presence feels evil, demonic, or predatory at the least. Sometimes the presence is seen, and its appearance usually takes one of several standard forms. It may be a dark hooded menacing figure, something like a druid priest or the grim reaper of horror stories. If the face is visible, it may appear alien, as reported by UFO abductees. Often the form is an old ugly woman, bestial in expression and appetite, thus the Old Hag myth. The bestiality may dominate so that one fears attack by some sort of wild animal. Women especially will feel the unbidden approach of a strange male, seeking sexual indulgence. Though men also will report sexual assault, perhaps at first welcoming the advance of a young female, only to recoil in horror as her face and figure morphs into the Old Hag. Her caresses turn to clawing, sweet smile to hungry leer. This would be the Incubus or Succubus form. Some complain of nightly encounters, even hourly attacks in succession during a single night. The victim is unable to move while the assault progresses, though feeling keenly every poke, prod, bite and ultimately painful sexual violation. Some will even awaken later to a body still aching from the trauma.

First reaction during ASP is to panic and struggle, instinctively knowing that if one could only move a finger or toe, the paralysis and assault would end. Failure to succeed regenerates the terror in a frenzied cycle. There is often an accompanying head-centered vibration, growing to an agonizing roar with every effort. Many tell of bell-like ringing or voices, laughing, mocking, growling or muttering – sometimes crowds of voices at once, even choral or orchestral music.

Depending on the sufferer's prior worldview or religious orientation, initial interpretation varies. One will be convinced that this is death and imminent

judgement. Another will interpret it as a trance or visionary perception of nonmaterial beings, such as ghosts, vampires, fairy folk or other mythical spirits. Others experience it as invasion by inhuman aliens demonstrating more advanced technology and thus able to manipulate human subjects mentally or even spiritually. It is difficult for the experiencer NOT to believe that the attack is physically real. So people will modify their initial interpretation later during calmer waking hours, persuading themselves that it could not have been real, rather a chemical, drug or perhaps electromagnetic induced hallucination. That is, until it happens again.

Eventually (sometimes initially), the experiencer discovers ability to move, though the motion is enhanced and notably different from normal waking mobility. This is where descriptions overlap those of other well-published sleep or night related adventures: OBE, Out-of-Body-Experience; LD, Lucid Dreaming; Alien Abduction; NDE, Near Death Experience. Superhuman abilities reported include flying, space travel, microscopic exploration, passing through walls, leaping tall buildings, creating or moving or growing objects with a thought or word. Environments range from city to country, residential to commercial, palace to hut, ancient historical setting to the present or distant future, any geography, another planet or region of space, even another dimension of existence. In short, it is the stuff of dreams, except that the dreamer is conscious. That is, he recalls that his actual physical self is back in bed (or it is supposed to be there). His thinking is clear as day-consciousness. Some will report increased clarity of thought, memory and comprehension of mysteries, physical or philosophical –only to find the knowledge irretrievable upon waking again to normal physical being.

Except for the unbelievable content of the experience, the very clarity of self-consciousness would be proof enough that it is all real. In fact, the experience will typically pass muster as real to first impression: objects feel solid, vision and hearing is acute. The sense of reality may continue, at least until some atypical object or event alerts the dreamer to re-evaluate and recognize it as another “false” awakening. I have experienced series of four or five such awakenings in succession, believing every time that I had finally awakened for real. As I have grown older, my most immediate clue is when I seem to awaken without any trace of normal physical soreness in muscle or joint.

Again, depending upon previous beliefs –religious or otherwise—the experiencer may attempt to call upon a higher power for deliverance. Many find their first prayers to Heaven answered promptly, re-awakening normally again, as if miraculously restored to physical as well as spiritual security and safety. And the same may never suffer ASP or OBE again. Others do not find escape this way for long, as hours or weeks or years later the experience returns, maybe with a different and unexpected twist.

It's as if the ASP/OBE phenomenon has a mind and strategy of its own, scheming to catch its subject unguarded and compel confrontation with the fear itself – to face the horror of being awake in an unfamiliar world, to meet and overcome the threat of victimization. Some report finally finding the courage to defy the dark man, vampire or old hag entity. Indescribably adventuresome experiences may follow, like a reward for having passed a test or crossed a barrier. The dreamer may continue though successive episodes alone or in company, human or otherwise.

Sometimes a more sustained companionship ensues, such as with a so-called spirit guide. And then, maybe years later, a new confrontation: this time a being of godlike proportion that does not yield or disappear at a prayer or word of command. To one it is a being of shadow and doom. Another reports encountering an angelic being of power and intense light. The entity stands before the dreamer as the embodiment of a challenge, a crisis of decision.

The experiencer has passed through fear of death itself, it would seem, to become player in an inter-dimensional sporting event. Then he discovers it is not a mere game after all, but a question of destiny.

** Pentecostalism would make another worthy study from the perspective of an anthroposophic worldview. The Pentecostal or Charismatic Christian also presumes that the human being is more than physical --rather multidimensional-- primarily soul and spirit, the material form derived therefrom as a crude and temporary reflection of a higher developing imperishable reality. Spiritual sight and hearing and other seeming super-human abilities are a given (called *gifts of the spirit*). These abilities are considered an inheritance of attributes native to the original *adamic* design for humanity, rendered latent due to misuse and disuse and timely recall by the Designers (lest Adam's descendants destroy themselves). This potential is recoverable by means of a new *baptism* or initiation into the life-regenerating power and personal mentorship of the newly restored human prototype, The Christ. This New Adam was first active in the soul and body of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. The initiation of the resurrected Christ is presented as the only safe and wholesome means of re-awakening this potential.

***See research on theories connecting ergot poisoning to altered states reported throughout human history. The hallucinogenic LSD was derived from ergot fungus when a self-appointed researcher recognized that misuse of ergot as a medicine was inducing hallucinations. Vivid visions, sounds and sensations reported by sufferers may be yet another instance of the untimely thrusting of awareness over a threshold of reality normally veiled from perception. See web links:

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case_salem/index.html

http://www.csp.org/chrestomathy/poisons_of.html

<http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi1037.htm>

A proper definition of *hallucination* does not question the reality of what is beheld. It recognizes rather that the world of objects so elucidated is experienced as real as physical phenomena, however nobody except other hallucinators are able to verify its existence. Of course, this would also be the case with any group lacking a vital physical sense. One hearing-able individual might be severely challenged to persuade a community of deaf people that a world of sound exists.

Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment **by Rudolf Steiner**

Italicized notes and comments by Stephen D Evans
also emboldened selections [and bracketed alternate phrasings]

http://wn.elib.com/Steiner/Books/GA010/English/GA010_index.html

My theory is that ASP (Awareness during Sleep Paralysis -- much like physical trauma, near-death experiences or hallucinogenic drugs) effects a sort of accidental or premature initiation into cognition of a supermaterial reality. This assumes existence of a hidden dimension underlying the familiar physical world (represented by our bodily senses and human brain), a parallel world where we co-exist as spiritual beings. This other or higher world remains mostly unknown – as if we were blind or deaf to its stimuli-- while corresponding spiritual senses lie dormant and perception veiled by the coarser screen of physical sensation.

Imagine that our bodily senses were a camera, on a fixed or auto focus setting, attempting to view the landscape outside through a decorative window screen. It is a very nice screen, a full color landscape scene printed on it, a picture modeled after the outside view. But the camera stubbornly insists on focusing close-up at the picture screen itself. That is until the photographer observes the problem, switches the camera to manual and sets focus instead on infinity or telephoto so that the actual forms and colors of the outside world are revealed beyond the screen. Of course, some cameras don't allow manual focus, so the photographer must find another way to remove the screen obstructing the intended view. Perhaps he should simply give up on mechanics, rely instead on his organic vision and draw or paint the picture he knows firsthand is there to see. Though some photographers are very nearsighted or not at all interested in the outside world. Perhaps intellectual honesty compels them to deny its existence or significance, so they will never be persuaded to bother learning how to use the other camera settings.

I begin my presentation of this book where Steiner describes the actual transition from solely physical to spiritual perception in most detail.

Readers may wish to skim the first time through, especially Chapter VI, perhaps reading only emboldened phrases and my italicized comments. The connection to the ASP phenomenon becomes more obvious in following chapters on the Transformation of Dream Life and Continuity of Consciousness (meaning full consciousness during sleep). The final chapters tell of encounters with various entities –beastly, demonic or godlike—of which many report during ASP as well, especially those who have dared to confront the characteristic “threatening presence” face to face as it were. Then I will backtrack to present the first five chapters concerned with the disciplined stages of preparation, training and conditions for a deliberate and timely initiation.

Chapter VI: Some Results of Initiation

One of the fundamental principles of true spiritual science is that the one who devotes himself to its study should do so with full consciousness; he should attempt nothing and practice nothing without knowledge of the effect [to be] produced.

And so I perceive my stumble into knowledge of a spiritual kind to have been rather accidental. Except for my Pentecostal Christian background, I had no prior warning of how it would feel to know acute self-consciousness apart from physical sensations, what I might see, what challenges I might confront. I can better understand why infants cry and toddlers protest so vehemently; I too (via ASP) have experienced rude awakening into an unfamiliar and alarmingly misbehaving mode of existence. As other ASP veterans will tell, it does NOT feel like mere dreaming. My initial conclusion was that my body had died or been rendered comatose. My worst fear was that my body was seized by some other spirit and actively committing atrocities beyond my knowledge-- the ultimate identity theft. Not until years later did I consider that these seemingly random spells might be the first hiccups of a natural, intended maturation of spiritual potential –in fact, not accidental at all. Rudolf Steiner, was actually training people to pursue scientifically this mode and sphere of extra-physical perception.

Here Steiner proceeds to summarize how specific organs of spirit (akin to physical organs of sight, hearing and feeling) will develop when exercised in a balanced manner, all together comprising a soul “body”.

The organ in the vicinity of the larynx has sixteen petals or spokes; the one in the region of the heart twelve, and the one in the pit of the stomach ten.

Thanks to the spiritual organ situated in the vicinity of the larynx, it becomes possible to survey clairvoyantly the thoughts and mentality of other beings, and to obtain a deeper insight into the true laws of natural phenomena. The organ situated near the heart permits of clairvoyant knowledge of the sentiments and disposition of other souls. When developed, this organ also makes it possible to observe certain deeper forces in animals and plants. By means of the organ in the so-called pit of the stomach, knowledge is acquired of the talents and capacities of souls; by its means, too, the part played by animals, plants, stones, metals, atmospheric phenomena and so on in the household of nature becomes apparent.

I know this all sounds fanciful to those readers preferring that all sensations—even inner experience—be described according to precepts of material science. Consider-- these inexplicable stirrings behind the human brow, throat, breast and stomach-- whatever bio-chemical events coincide, their origin and significance may yet be primarily non-material. Those who have awakened during sleep paralysis to recognize thoughts, feelings and desires as their very own, these people are challenged to question whether this personal inner world is truly dependent upon physical body functions—regardless of prior philosophical, religious or scientific orientations.

*Steiner outlines how development of the spiritual sense organ near the larynx is evidenced by care and attention to **eight functions of soul**: self-directed education, self-controlled resolve, deliberate speech, regulating habits and actions, healthful life management, maximizing personal potential, maximized learning from all experiences, introspective self-evaluation.*

These were all familiar disciplines, thanks to my Christian upbringing. In fact, I might have considered myself quite the master of this much...Until my early ASP awakenings revealed how vulnerable I truly was when left entirely to my lonely self, stripped suddenly and cruelly of all physical and material securities. I felt transmuted to infancy again, spiritually speaking. I realized that I needed life (and religion) to start training me all over again. And indeed, the worst of ASP went into a sort of remission for some ten to fifteen years of marriage, fatherhood and occupation. Late-thirties, the ASP came back in full force. It was spiritual exercise time again, more like white-water

rafting than sleepy creepies this round. Some most notable differences were the extraordinary sights, thrilling acrobatics and, finally, enthralling company of other people over there. That's right --no more loneliness. (There were some frightfully inhuman beings also.) For a season, I actually started wishing for more. Whenever I was there, exploring an ASP-gated setting, I didn't want to come back. Once I even crossed over deliberately –though the finish of that adventure scared me sober again. It was made painfully clear that I wasn't yet fit to pilot this submarine solo.

As the eight basic soul functions are exercised in the material world, the corresponding sixteen-fold organ –likened in shape to a lotus flower—develops its clairvoyant capacity. The student must learn to seek out truth for its own sake (just as the physical scientist aspires); it is that pursuit which enables the “lotus” petals to bloom symmetrically. He must follow thoughts and speech and good intentions with actual deeds, committing such to habit, before the sense organ can perform as intended.

Now this lotus flower **may be made to develop in another way** by following certain other instructions [*shortcuts*]. But all such methods are rejected by true spiritual science, for they **lead to the destruction of physical health and to moral ruin**. They are easier to follow than those here described

The distorted development of [an organ of spirit] results not only in **illusions and fantastic conceptions**, should a certain degree of clairvoyance be acquired, but also in **errors and instability in ordinary life**. Such a development may be the cause of timidity, envy, vanity, haughtiness, willfulness and so on in a person who hitherto was free from these defects.

*Results of **distorted development** may sound familiar to some ASP survivors. More is described throughout this book, repeated warnings against the pursuit of spiritual experience via shortcuts, obsolete or incautious means. I don't believe that anyone suffers ASP necessarily through lack of caution. It may rather represent re-emergence of a latent mode of consciousness, in ancient times more common (at least among certain groups). However, the distortion effect appears to be similar.*

*Right development of that spiritual organ centered at the physical heart requires **six attributes of soul**: ordered thinking, consistency of actions, perseverance in pursuing goals, uncritical of others, open-minded impartiality, self-composure in the face of joy or sorrow.*

As before, special instructions can be given to bring this [sense organ] to fruition [more quickly], but here again the perfect symmetry of its form depends on the development of the qualities mentioned, the neglect of which results in this organ being formed into a caricature of its proper shape. In this case, should a certain clairvoyance be attained, the qualities in question **may take an evil instead of a good direction**.

As regards the esoteric student, the observance of these principles is indispensable. Should he attempt esoteric training without conforming to them, this could only result in his **entering the higher worlds with inadequate organs**, and instead of perceiving the truth he would **be subject to deceptions and illusions**. He would attain a certain clairvoyance, but for the most part, be the victim of greater blindness than before. Formerly he at least stood firmly within the physical world; now he looks beyond this physical world and grows confused about it before acquiring a firm footing in a higher world. All **power of distinguishing truth from error would then perhaps fail** him, and he would entirely lose his way in life. It is just for this reason that patience is so necessary in these matters.

Should these [flower-like organs] be brought to fruition before they have quietly attained their correct form, **mere caricatures would be the result**. Their maturity can be brought about by the special instructions given in esoteric training, but their [balanced] form is dependent on the method of life described above.

Again, just when I might have believed that life experience had matured my character adequately, ASP trials showed me to be sadly deficient. Over on the other side of reality, I was ever the social misfit and many times proven downright criminal in my passions and behavior. I came back appalled at myself. I determined not to seek entry to that world before praying that my character and spirit become better prepared to be and do something right, something helpful --at the very least to do no harm. Simply exploring and seeking innocent fun was too risky, all things (and all persons) considered.

An inner training of a particularly intimate character is necessary for the development of the ten-petalled lotus flower, for it is now a question of learning consciously to control and dominate the sense-impressions themselves. This is of particular importance in the initial stages of clairvoyance, for it is only by this means that a source of countless **illusions and fancies** is avoided. People as a rule

do not realize by what factors their sudden ideas and memories are dominated, and how they are produced.... The student must avoid all vacuous gazing and mechanical listening. For him only those things exist to which he turns his eye or his ear. He must practice the power of hearing nothing, even in the greatest disturbance, if he does not will to hear; and he must make his eyes unimpressionable to things of which he does not particularly take notice. He must be shielded as by an inner armor against all unconscious impressions.... Only by such severe self-discipline can the ten-petalled lotus flower attain its proper form. The student's inner life must become a life of attention, and he must learn really to hold at a distance everything to which he should not or does not wish to direct his attention.

This alludes to a discipline that might have helped a great deal during my first years of ASP terror. It wasn't until much later that I discovered the power of extinguishing a vision with a word. During ASP and lucid dreams, things and beings appear to sight, hearing and touch as real and solid as matter. One might never think to try this trick of the Will and the Word unless one had otherwise exercised the belief that faith may literally move mountains, at least on that side of reality. One of the first clues is the discovery by some that the law of gravity does not necessary rule there as we know it during waking hours.

It must be understood that the very greatest care is necessary at this stage of development, for the play of unconscious memories is here exceedingly active. If this were not the case, many people would [already] possess this inner sense, for it comes almost immediately into evidence when the impressions delivered by the outer senses are held so completely under control that they become dependent on nothing save attention or inattention. **This inner sense remains ineffective as long as the powerful outer senses smother and benumb it.**

And here is one spiritual-scientific explanation as to how ASP may become the gate for an unintended novice to pass relatively unprepared over this threshold, otherwise guarded against entry of the uninitiated. Old men still dream mere dreams, while the younger generation has begun (accidentally?) to see visions of a realm previously veiled from view of all but prophets and a few reckless wizards (lookup Acts 2:17, Bible www.blueletterbible.org). Other experiments involving sense-deprivation (much like nightly sleep paralysis) have revealed the same, likewise the coma or trance induced by drug or trauma. As the veil of physical bodyhood is lifted --when the outer curtain of static noise generated by bodily senses is silenced --an inner spectrum of finer senses are freed to begin illuminating the quantum reality from which

material appearances are projected. For the infant-like novice, those senses suffer from under-developed powers of focus and frequency discrimination, also a deficiency of conceptual categories that might otherwise render sensible the confusion of spiritual forms, movements, sounds and expressions flooding upon the unsuspecting naked pre-born human soul.

No wonder ASP presents such a menagerie of beasts, waking nightmare assaults and dizzying roller coaster rides to the would-be sleeper. It's like putting a two-year-old at the stick of an intergalactic fighter ship and expecting at his safe return that he give an accurate account of mission accomplished.

Still greater difficulty attends the development of the six-petalled lotus flower situated in the center of the body, for it can only be achieved as the result of complete [self] mastery and control of the whole personality . . . so that body, soul and spirit form one harmonious whole The **soul must not be impelled through the body** to lusts and passions which are antagonistic to pure and noble thought. Yet the spirit must not stand like a slave-driver over the soul, dominating it with laws and commandments; the soul must rather learn to obey these laws and duties out of its own free inclination. The student must . . . perfect himself in this way to the extent of **being free to abandon himself to the functions of the senses, [yet] these should be so purified that they lose the power to drag him down to their level** So long as self-chastisement is necessary, no one can pass a certain stage of esoteric development; for a virtue practiced under constraint is futile. If there is any lust remaining [whether of body or soul], it interferes with esoteric development, however great the effort made not to humor it.

This is the anthroposophic argument for and against religion. Where it is perceived or administered legalistically like a slave driver, religiosity may actually harm and hinder the disciple's spiritual progress. And the proof of that will be the character of one's behavior once the physical biochemical regulators are removed, unleashing the soul to fend for itself. One example of the resulting confusion may be seen in the seeming self-imposed suffering of neurosis. Another example is the typically panicked reaction to ASP darkness and nothingness, then the feeling of a threatening presence, and finally helplessness against assault of beast or demon, fearing a fate worse than death. (Steiner describes elsewhere how unbridled passions will take the form of various beasts confronting the unprepared initiate—again, a familiar theme in ASP.)

On the other hand, religious creed, devotion and community can serve as mentor, coaching such patient and balanced exercise of the sort of character-building which is revealed to be actual body-building of a spiritual kind. Then when the physical/surrogate protections are suddenly found missing, the soul is not rendered entirely faithless and helpless. Look for more on this later.

The six-petalled lotus flower, when developed, **permits intercourse with beings** of higher worlds, though only **when their existence is manifested in the astral or soul-world**. . . . This entry into the spiritual world proper must always run parallel with the development of the lotus flowers, otherwise the student will fall into error and confusion. **He would undoubtedly be able to see, but he would remain incapable of forming a correct estimate of what he saw.**

The development of the soul-body in the manner described above permits perception in a supersensible world, but anyone wishing to find his way in this world must not remain stationary at this stage The student must acquire the power of regulating and controlling the movement of his spiritual organs independently and with complete consciousness; otherwise **he would become a plaything for external forces and powers**. To avoid this he must acquire the faculty of hearing what is called the *inner word*, and this involves the development not only of the soul-body but also of the etheric body (*See my introduction to ASP and Anthroposophy for working definitions of terms like **astral** and **etheric**.*)

... [T]he stage is reached when **the student becomes gifted with the inner word**. All things now acquire a new significance for him. They become as it were **spiritually audible** in their innermost self, and speak to him of their essential being

Stated differently, when all the spiritual organs develop properly and start to function in concert, the spiritual stimuli can be received in focus and perceived with full depth of intrinsic meaning. Similarly, a toddler doesn't have to be taught that a rubber ball is entirely different from a china dinner plate of similar diameter. First glance from a distance, low light and unfocused, they both appear as round objects. If all his physical senses are working together, he can see and hear the difference, then observe their distinctive uses, long before he gets his hands on them.

At this point the spiritual world is entered. If the student has advanced so far, he acquires a new understanding for all that the great teachers of humanity have uttered. The sayings of the Buddha and the Gospels, for instance, produce a new effect on him. They pervade him with a rapture of which he had not dreamed before. For the tone of their words follows the movements and rhythms which he

has himself formed within himself. He can now have positive knowledge that a Buddha or the Evangelists did not utter their own revelations but those which flowed into them from the inmost being of all things.

*I have not learned of many ASP-initiates attaining the sort of **rapture** described here. Most are still recovering from the shock of terror. But there are those who can quiet the panic, accept the vacancy of senses, the lonely void, the dearth of life-breath and dare to pass through ASP as it were a gate or door. They find new breath. Movement is restored, even super-enhanced. The light comes on to reveal that the inner world is indeed larger, more colorful, more adventure-filled than that restrictive outer world recently abandoned –when was it? That existence seems so long ago and so trivial, so fake. Now THIS ... This is really something. This is real. Or is this also merely an appearance, a projection of the really real thing?*

A completely new life opens out before the student when the development of his etheric body begins in the way described above The sixteen-petalled lotus, for instance, enables him to perceive spiritual figures of a higher world. He must learn now how different these figures can be when caused by different objects or beings. In the first place, he must notice that his own thoughts and feelings exert a powerful influence on certain of these figures, on others little or no influence

Here follows discussion of a possible solution to one of the great puzzles of ASP: What is the origin and significance of the terror? For some, this terror is a feeling of being stalked. For others it is voices threatening or mocking. Many are apparently attacked and brutalized by entities, human or otherwise. The predators may sport features confusing animal with human characteristics in fantastical or demonic ways. It's the stuff of classic nightmare and myth, but experienced by the awakened consciousness instead of a temporary dream identity. This helplessness against certain foes may be further aggravated-- once the paralysis is overcome and a more versatile astral or dream body discovered-- by experience of super-human power over common objects and obstacles during ASP. One discovers that he can skate, leap, climb, fly and walk through walls like some sort of demigod, make things move, grow, appear or disappear like magic. But there is always some sort of nemesis that stubbornly refuses to be extinguished as mere imagination or illusion.

Thus by his conscious thoughts and feelings a person can exercise an influence on all forms which do not proceed from himself; but over those which he [initially] brings about in the higher world he possesses no power, once he has created them. Now, it follows from what has been said that on this higher plane man's inner life of instincts, desires, ideas displays itself outwardly in definite forms, just like all the other beings and objects. To higher knowledge, **the inner world appears as part of the outer world**. In a higher world man's **inner being confronts him as a reflected image**, just as though in the physical world he were surrounded by mirrors and could observe his physical body in that way.

At this stage of development the student has reached the point **where he can free himself from the illusion** resulting from the initiation of his personal self. **He can now observe that inner self as outer world**, just as he hitherto regarded as outer world everything that affected his senses. Thus he learns by gradual experience **to deal with himself as hitherto he dealt with the beings around him**.

Were the student to obtain an insight into these spiritual worlds without sufficient preparation regarding their nature, **he would find himself confronted by the picture of his own soul** as though by an enigma. There **his own desires and passions confront him in animal or, more rarely, in human forms**. It is true that animal forms of this world are never quite similar to those of the physical world, yet they possess a remote resemblance: inexpert observers often take them to be identical. Now, upon entering this world, an entirely new method of judgment must be acquired; for apart from the fact that things actually pertaining to inner nature appear as outer world, they also bear the character of mirrored reflections of what they really are.... A wish directed toward an outer object appears as a form moving toward the person wishing. **Passions residing in the lower part of human nature can assume animal forms or similar shapes** that hurl themselves against the individual. In reality, these passions are headed outward; they seek satisfaction in the outer world, but this striving outward **appears in the mirrored reflection as an attack** on the individual from whom they proceed.

If the student, before attaining insight into higher worlds, has learned by quiet and sincere self-observation to realize the qualities and the defects of his own character, he will then, at the moment when his own inner self confronts him as a mirrored image, find strength and courage to conduct himself in the right way. People who have failed to test themselves in this way, and are insufficiently acquainted with their own inner self, **will not recognize themselves in their own mirrored image and will mistake it for an alien reality**. Or they may **become alarmed at the vision and, because they cannot endure the sight, deceive themselves into believing the whole thing is nothing but an illusion** which cannot lead them anywhere. In either case the person in question, through prematurely attaining a certain stage of inner development, would fatally obstruct his own progress.

Pictures, then, of a spiritual kind are first encountered by the student on his progress into higher worlds; and **the reality to which these pictures correspond is actually within himself**. He should be far enough advanced to refrain from desiring reality of a more robust kind at this initial stage, and to regard these pictures as timely. He **will soon meet something quite new** within this world of pictures. His lower self is before him as a mirrored image; but from within this image there appears the true reality of his higher self

This “something quite new” alludes to the crisis encounters discussed later as the first and second guardians of the threshold.

This is the moment when the two-petalled lotus in the region of the eyes is required. If it now begins to stir, the student finds it possible to bring his higher ego in contact with higher spiritual beings.

A person attaining clairvoyance without [adequate] preparation would resemble a child born with eyes and ears but without a brain. The entire world of sound and color would display itself before him, but he would be helpless in it.

Chapter VII: The Transformation of Dream Life

The ASP sufferer knows that the experience is somehow related to the dream life, that it happens when the body is asleep and subject to normal benign dreaming. But a keenly awakened mind during sleep feels alarmingly abnormal (at first), even before there is anything frightening to see or hear. Simple inability to feel the body move or lungs breathe, provokes panic. There is certainly nothing lonelier than acute self-awareness while drifting bodiless in sightless space.

I will never forget the foreboding of being sucked down into a yawning void, dreading the very thought of what hellish appetite might be awaiting my fall. Having only naked will to fight with --no arms or legs, no voice except thought—I would scream defiance and claw my way back upward. A buzzing vibration (where my head and ears used to be) would reverberate with every effort, finally roaring and exploding in deafening ferocity, and I would quit struggling at intervals just to find relief from the noise. Worse was the feeling of betrayal and humiliation when I tripped into my first false awakening, having believed that my willpower had prevailed to force body and soul to reunite and re-awaken. But the familiar view of my own safe bedroom was not the reality I believed. When the noise returned, I knew my conquest was a cruel hoax.

Never again would the solid waking world of material senses merit my trust –sight and touch could no more deliver assurance of reality than dreams. The physical world was never intended as anchor or harbor against uncertainty of being.

An intimation that the student has reached or will soon reach the stage of development described in the preceding chapter will be found in the change which comes over his dream life. His dreams, hitherto confused and haphazard, now begin to assume a more regular character. Their **pictures begin to succeed each other in sensible connection, like the thoughts and ideas of daily life**. He can discern in them law, cause, and effect. The content, too, of his dreams is changed. While hitherto he discerned only reminiscences of daily life and transformed impressions of his surroundings or of his physical condition, there now appear before him pictures of a world he has hitherto not known.... The more regulated dreams of esoteric students (whose etheric body has begun its development) retain [the standard] symbolical [mode] of expression, but they will cease merely to reflect reality connected with the *physical* body and physical environment. As the dreams due to [physical] causes become more connected, **they are mingled with similar pictures expressing things and events of another world**. These are the first experiences lying beyond the range of waking consciousness.

Yet no true mystic will ever make his experiences in dreams the basis of any authoritative account of the higher world. Such dreams must be merely considered as providing the first hint of a higher development. Very soon . . . the student's dreams . . . will be mentally controlled and supervised like the impressions and conceptions of waking consciousness. **The difference between dream and waking consciousness grows ever smaller. The dreamer remains awake in the fullest sense of the word during his dream life; that is, he is aware of his mastery and control over his own vivid mental activity.**

During our **dreams we are actually in a world other than that of our senses**; but with undeveloped spiritual organs we can form none other than the confused conceptions of it described above. [For instance, it is no more present for us than] the world of sense could be for a being equipped [with only] rudimentary eyes. **That is why we can see nothing in this [other] world but counterfeits and reflections of daily life**. The latter are perceptible to us because **our own soul paints its daily experiences in pictorial form into the substance of which that other world consists**. It must be clearly understood that in addition to our ordinary conscious work-a-day life **we lead a second, unconscious life in that other world**. We engrave in it all our thoughts and perceptions. These tracings only become visible when the lotus flowers are developed. Now, in every human being there are slender rudiments of these lotus flowers. We cannot perceive by means of them **during waking consciousness** because the impressions made on them are very faint. We cannot see the stars during the daytime for a similar reason: their visibility is extinguished by the mighty glare of the sun. Thus, too, the **faint spiritual**

impressions cannot make themselves felt in the face of the powerful impressions received through the senses.

Now, **when the gate of the senses is closed during sleep**, these other impressions begin to emerge confusedly, and **the dreamer becomes aware of experiences in another world**

This is the beginning of life and activity in a new world, and at this point esoteric training must set the student a twofold task. To begin with, he must learn to take stock of everything he observes in his dreams, exactly as though he were awake [and then] make the same observations during ordinary waking consciousness. He will so train his attention and receptivity for these spiritual impressions that they [will always be evident] in addition to the [physical].

When the student has acquired this faculty . . . he can henceforth **discern all that the spiritual world contains as the cause of the physical world** The next task now confronting him is to grow, as it were, into this higher self [which resides in the spiritual world] really to regard it as his own true self and to act accordingly. He realizes ever more clearly and intensely that his physical body and what he hitherto called his “I” are merely the instruments of his higher self.

Now, the [perspective] of an esoterically developed person toward the things of the spiritual world is very different from [how the undeveloped person perceives] things of the physical world. The latter feels himself to [occupy a particular spot in the environment of the senses] and the surrounding objects to be [separate and] external to him. **The spiritually developed person feels himself to be united with, and as though in the interior of, the spiritual objects he perceives.** He wanders, in fact, from place to place in spiritual space, and is therefore called “the wanderer” in the language of occult science. He has no home at first. Should he, however, remain a mere wanderer he would be unable to define any object in spiritual space. Just as objects and places in physical space are defined from a fixed point of departure, this, too, must be the case in the other world. **He must seek out some place, thoroughly investigate it, and take spiritual possession of it.** In this place he must establish his spiritual home and relate everything else to it.

Perspective is indeed different and disorienting during ASP, at least until the sojourner learns new rules of movement and confrontation. Some report the ability to see all sides of a piece of furniture –back, top, underside, inside-- without having to move around or open it up. This is surely something that the day-trained subconscious would never think to create in a dream environment. Besides the ability to pass through a barrier or fly over a landscape, sometimes it feels more like the landscape has shrunk. Or else it is my dream body that has expanded, like a cloud extending over and around a larger and larger area.

I also recognize this tendency to wander from place to place. And accompanying my progress is this feeling that I actually own this house, that I have traveled this countryside many times before, that I should recognize this person and remember details of a long shared history. Part of the unsettledness is my desire to see as much as possible and so I must rush before my physical body abruptly calls me to rejoin it back in bed. I am reminded of a four-year-old in a toy store, darting delightedly from one corner to the other and back again, hoping thereby to get his hands on every item of desire before mother drags him out of the store. Of course he can never really enjoy and or explore anything, having only precious seconds to spend on each.

Spiritual vision at this stage extends to the spiritual counterparts of the physical world, so far as these exist in the so-called astral world.... [For instance] forces drive the sap through the capillaries of the plant, cause the blossoms to unfold and the seed vessels to burst. To developed spiritual organs of perception all these forces appear gifted with form and color, just as the objects of the physical world have form and color for physical eyes.... Animal and human impulses are perceptible to him not only through their physical manifestation in the individual, but directly as objects; [the student] perceives them just as he perceives tables and chairs in the physical world. The whole range of instincts, impulses, desires and passions, both of an animal and of a human being, constitute the astral cloud or aura in which the being is enveloped.

Furthermore, the clairvoyant can at this stage perceive things which are almost or entirely withheld from the senses. He can, for instance, tell the astral difference between a room full of low or of high-minded people. Not only the physical but also the spiritual atmosphere of a hospital differs from that of a ballroom. A commercial town has a different astral air from that of a university town. In the initial stages of clairvoyance this perceptive faculty is but slightly developed; its relation to the objects in question is similar to the relation of dream consciousness to waking consciousness in ordinary life; it will, however, become fully awakened at this stage as well.

Chapter VIII: The Continuity of Consciousness

Human life runs its course in **three alternating states or conditions, namely, waking, dreaming sleep, and dreamless sleep.** The attainment of the higher knowledge of spiritual worlds can be readily understood if a conception be formed of the changes occurring in these three conditions, as experienced by one seeking such higher knowledge. When no training has been undertaken to attain this knowledge, human consciousness is continually interrupted by the restful interval of sleep. During these intervals the soul knows nothing of the outer world, and equally little of itself. Only at certain periods dreams emerge from the deep ocean

of insensibility, dreams linked to the occurrences of the outer world or the conditions of the physical body. At first, dreams are only regarded as a particular manifestation of sleep-life, and thus only two states are generally spoken of, namely, sleeping and waking. For spiritual science, however, **dreams have an independent significance apart from the other two conditions....** [The student of higher knowledge] must not regard these revelations as actual knowledge so long as the same things do not also reveal themselves during ordinary waking life. But in time he achieves this as well: he develops this **faculty of carrying over into waking consciousness the condition he created for himself out of dream life.** Thus something new is introduced into the world of his senses that enriches it. Just as a person born blind and successfully operated upon will recognize the surrounding objects as enriched by all that the eye perceives, so too will anyone having become clairvoyant in the above manner perceive the whole world surrounding him peopled with new qualities, things, beings, and so forth. He now **need no longer wait for his dreams to live in another world**, but he can at any suitable moment put himself into the above condition for the purpose of higher perception. This condition then acquires a significance for him similar to the perception, in ordinary life, of [intuitively distinguishing sentient creatures from insentient things]. It can truly be said that the student opens the eyes of his soul and beholds things which necessarily remain concealed from the bodily senses.

Now this condition is only transitional to still higher stages of knowledge. If the student continues his esoteric exercises he will find, in due time, that the radical change, as described above, does not confine itself to his dream life, but that this transformation also extends to what was previously a condition of deep dreamless sleep. **Isolated conscious experiences begin to interrupt the complete insensibility of this deep sleep.** Perceptions previously unknown to him emerge from the pervading darkness of sleep.

Some idea can be given of those experiences which emerge from the insensibility of deep sleep if they be compared to a kind of hearing. We may speak of perceptible tones and words. While the experiences during dreaming sleep may fitly be designated as **a kind of vision**, the **facts observed during deep sleep may be compared to auricular impressions....** The **first revelations** he receives are **in tones and words**; later on, he can here [as during dream sleep] ascend to colors and forms.

Now, when these experiences during deep sleep first come to the notice of the student, his next task must be to sense them as clearly and vividly as possible. At first this presents great difficulty, the perception of these experiences being exceedingly slight. **The student knows very well, on waking, that he has had an experience, but is completely in the dark as regards its nature.** The most important thing during this initial stage is to **remain quiet and composed, and not for a moment lapse into any unrest or impatience.** The latter is under all circumstances detrimental; it can never accelerate development, but only delays it. The student must cultivate a quiet and yielding receptivity for the gift that is

presented to him; **all violence must be repressed**. Should he at any period not become aware of experiences during sleep he must wait patiently until this is possible. Some day this moment will assuredly arrive. And **this perceptive faculty**, if awaited with patience and composure, remains a secure possession; while **should it appear momentarily in answer to forcible methods, it may be completely lost for a long time**.

During every-day life man reflects on his environment; his mind tries to **conceive and understand the connection existing between things**; he seeks to grasp in thought and idea what his senses perceive. **It is to these ideas and concepts that the experiences during sleep refer**. Obscure, shadowy concepts become sonorous and living in a way comparable only to the tones and the words of the physical world. It seems to the student ever more and more as though the solution of the riddles over which he ponders is **whispered to him in tones and words** out of a higher world. And he is able to connect with ordinary life whatever comes to him from a higher world. What was formerly only accessible to his thought now becomes actual experience, just as living and substantial as an experience in this physical world can be. The things and beings of this physical world are by no means only what they appear to be for physical perception. They are the expression and effluence of a spiritual world. **This spiritual world, hitherto concealed from the student, now resounds for him out of his whole environment**.

By concentration and meditation the student works upon his soul and develops within it the soul-organs of perception. While thus applying himself to the task of concentration and meditation his soul grows within his body, just as the embryo child grows in the body of the mother. When the isolated experiences during sleep begin, as described, the moment of birth is approaching for **the liberated soul**; for she **has literally become a new being**, developed by the individual within himself, from seed to fruit.

That this higher soul-being should be born during deep sleep will be easily grasped, for if that delicate organism lacking all power of resistance chanced to appear during physical every-day life it could not prevail against the harsh and powerful processes of this life. Its activity would be of no account against that of the body. **During sleep, however, when the body rests in as far as its activity is dependent on sense perception, the activity of the higher soul, at first so delicate and inconspicuous, can come into evidence**. Here again the student must bear in mind that these experiences during sleep may not be regarded as fully valid knowledge, so long as he is not in a position to carry over his awakened higher soul into waking consciousness as well. The acquisition of this faculty will enable him to perceive the spiritual world in its own character, among and within the experiences of the day; that is, the hidden secrets of his environment will be conveyed to his soul as tones and words.

Now, the student must realize at this stage of development that he is dealing with separate and more or less **isolated spiritual experiences**. He should therefore

beware of constructing out of them a complete whole or even a connected system of knowledge. In this case, all manner of fantastic ideas and conceptions would be mixed into the soul-world, and a world might thus easily be constructed which had nothing to do with the real spiritual world. The student must continually practice self-control. The right thing to do is to strive for an ever clearer conception of the isolated real experiences, and to await the spontaneous arrival of new experiences which will connect themselves, as though of their own accord, with those already recorded. By virtue of the power of the spiritual world into which he has now found his way, and through continued application to his prescribed exercises, the student experiences an **ever increasing extension and expansion of consciousness during sleep.** The unconscious intervals during sleep-life grow ever smaller, while more and more experiences emerge from erstwhile unconsciousness. These experiences thus link themselves together increasingly of their own accord, without this true unity being disturbed by all manner of combinations and inferences, which in any case would only originate in an intellect accustomed to the physical world. Yet the less the habits of thought acquired in the physical world are allowed to play into these higher experiences, the better it is.

By thus conducting himself the student approaches ever nearer to the attainment of that condition, on his path to higher knowledge, in which the **unconsciousness of sleep-life is transformed into complete consciousness.** When his body rests, man **lives in surroundings which are just as real as those of his waking daily life.** It is needless to say that the reality during sleep is different from physical reality surrounding the physical body. The student learns—indeed he must learn if he is to retain a firm footing in the physical world and not become a visionary—to connect the higher experiences of sleep with his physical environment. At first, however, the world entered during sleep is a completely new revelation. This important stage of development, at which consciousness is retained in the life during sleep, is **known in spiritual science as the continuity of consciousness.** The condition here indicated is regarded, at a certain stage of development, as a kind of ideal, attainable at the end of a long path. What the student first learns is the extension of consciousness into two soul-states, in the first of which only disordered dreams were previously possible, and in the second only unconscious dreamless sleep. Anyone having reached this stage of development does not cease experiencing and learning during those intervals when the physical body rests, and when the soul receives no impressions through the instrumentality of senses.

IX: The Splitting of the Human Personality During Spiritual Training

During sleep no impressions are conveyed to the human soul through the instrumentality of the physical sense-organs. The impressions from the ordinary outer world do not find their way to the soul when in that condition.

This includes the physical body's sense perceptions of its own activity and well-being, the self-diagnostic mechanism. Hence, initial

perceptions of paralysis and suffocation characterizing ASP. Most medical analysts quite agree on this point. As for succeeding perceptions common to ASP sufferers—they are generally explained away as hallucination, a seeming reality generated by the unconscious to fill the vacuum created by lack of “true” physical sensation.

Of course, the logical and necessary end to this argument must apply to all inner experience—even that which we cherish as true and healthy self-consciousness—reducing it to mere imaginary interpretations of various chemical states. Thus our highest experience-definition-standard of being is demoted to the level of a molecular mush hardly more profound nor less implausible than the evolutionist’s primordial soup. Yet, the very process by which the courageous rationalist achieves this realization is thereby discredited. He is absolutely certain of only one thing: That no spiritual absolute exists. Every material event must, by definition, be caused by another material event. Even immaterial experiences (feelings, thoughts, intentions) must ultimately be explained in material terms. Therefore, other purely spiritual stimuli—beauty, order, justice, goodness, truth-- are all deceptions, and stubbornly faithful devotion to truth is the only actual evil.

One possible remedy to such foolishness is to consciously experience death, that is the inarguable separation of inner soul experience from the self-governing chemistry of corporeal being.

In certain respects **the soul [during sleep] is actually outside the part of the human being—the so-called physical body—which in waking life is the medium for sense perceptions and thought.** The soul is then only connected with the finer bodies (the etheric and the astral), which are beyond the scope of physical sense observation. But the activity of these finer bodies does not cease during sleep. Just as the physical body is connected and lives with the things and beings of the physical world, affecting them and being affected by them, so, too, does the soul live in a higher world; only, this life of the soul continues also during sleep. **The soul is in full activity during sleep, but we can know nothing of this activity so long as we have no spiritual organs of perception through which to observe** what is going on around us and see what we ourselves are doing during sleep, [just] as we observe our daily physical environment with our ordinary senses. The preceding chapters have shown that esoteric training consists in the development of such spiritual sense organs. Now if, as a result of esoteric training, the student's life **during sleep** is transformed in the manner described in the foregoing chapter, **he will, when in that condition, be able to follow consciously everything going on around him.** He can at will **find his way in his environment as he could, when awake,** with his ordinary senses.

...Just as the life of a person born blind is changed, through a successful operation, from its previous dependence on a guide, so too is the life of a person changed through esoteric training. He **outgrows the principle of being guided by a master** and must henceforward undertake to be his own guide. The moment this occurs he is, of course, **liable to commit errors totally unknown to ordinary consciousness**. He acts now from a world from which, formerly, higher powers unknown to him influenced him.... The student ... must now himself accomplish things which were hitherto done for him without his co-operation.

It is for this reason that so much is found in books dealing with these matters concerning the dangers connected with the ascent into higher worlds. The descriptions sometimes given of these dangers may well make timid souls shudder at the prospect of this higher life. Yet the fact is that **dangers only arise when the necessary precautions are neglected**. If all the measures counseled by true esoteric science are adopted, the ascent will indeed ensue through **experiences surpassing in power and magnitude everything the boldest flights of sense-bound fantasy can picture**; and yet there can be no question of injury to health or life. **The student meets with horrible powers threatening life at every turn and from every side**. It will even be possible for him to make use of certain forces and beings existing beyond physical perception, and the **temptation is great to control these forces for the furtherance of personal and forbidden interests**, or to employ them wrongly out of a deficient knowledge of the higher worlds. Some of these especially important experiences, for instance, the meeting with Guardian of the Threshold, will be described in the following chapters. Yet we must realize that **the hostile powers are none the less present, even though we know nothing of them**.... A real danger can only arise if the student, through impatience or arrogance, assumes too early a certain independence with regard to the experiences of the higher worlds; if he cannot wait to gain really sufficient insight into the supersensible laws. In these spheres, modesty and humility are far less empty words than in ordinary life.

In the course of higher development, the threads interconnecting the three fundamental forces [of the soul –thinking, feeling, and willing (desire and resolve)] are severed. At first this severance occurs only within the finer soul organism [astral and etheric bodies], but at a still higher stage the separation extends also to the physical body. It is a fact that in higher spiritual development the brain divides into three separate parts. This separation is not physically perceptible in the ordinary way, nor can it be demonstrated by the keenest instruments. Yet it occurs, and the clairvoyant has means of observing it. The brain of the higher clairvoyant divides into **three independently active entities**: The thought-brain, the feeling-brain, and the will-brain.

When it occurs during waking life, medical science calls this condition bi-polarization or schizophrenia and introduces chemical therapy to restore proper balance.

Thus the organs of thinking, feeling, and willing become individualized; their connection henceforth is not maintained by laws inherent in themselves, but must be managed by the awakened higher consciousness of the individual. This, then, is the change which the student observes coming over him: that no connection arises of itself between an idea and a feeling or a will-impulse, unless he himself provides one. No impulse urges him from thought to action unless he himself in freedom gives rise to this impulse.... **The student's great achievement is the attainment of complete mastery over the combined activity of the three soul forces;** but at the same time the responsibility for this activity is placed entirely in his own hands.

So why has this fragmentation become necessary or timely with awareness during sleep?

.... The force, for instance, inherent in the will can affect definite things and the beings of the higher worlds, and also perceive them; but it can only do so when liberated from its connection with thinking and feeling within the soul. The moment this connection is severed, **the activity of the will can be exteriorized.** The same applies to the forces of thinking and feeling.... In the supersensible world, hatred becomes a visible phenomenon, but the clairvoyant can only perceive it in so far as he is able to project outwards the force lying in his feeling.

Just as the physical eye is useless as an organ of sight if one cannot consciously look outward through it --ever receiving visual sensations yet never able to focus or follow movement or associate shapes and depth and color with any meaningful idea of the thing or person observed.

Through the separation of the forces of thinking, feeling, and willing, the possibility of a three-fold aberration arises for anyone neglecting the injunctions given by esoteric science. Such **an aberration can occur if the connecting threads are severed before the higher consciousness is sufficiently advanced** to hold the reins and guide properly the separated forces into free and harmoniously combined activity.... Predominating will, for instance, is prevented by the leveling influence of thinking and feeling from lapsing into any particular excesses. When, however, a person of such **predominating will** undertakes esoteric training, feeling and thinking cease to exert their regular influence on the will when the latter constantly presses on to great exertions of power. If, then, such a person is not sufficiently advanced to control completely the higher consciousness and himself restore harmony, the will pursues its own unbridled way, continually overpowering its possessor. Feeling and thought lapse into complete impotence; the individual is scourged by his over-mastering will. A **violent nature is the result**, rushing from one unbridled action to another.

Likewise, the unbalanced predominance of the feeling and thinking life of soul creates a being exhibiting extreme co-dependence in one case,

complete withdrawal in the other. Insatiable monster, helpless victim or unimpressible recluse: choose your neurosis.

What appears to be a harmless characteristic as long as its possessor is without esoteric training, namely, a predominance of thinking or feeling or willing, is so intensified in an esoteric student that the universally human element, indispensable for life, becomes obscured.

Yet a really serious danger cannot threaten the student until he has acquired the ability to include in his waking consciousness the experiences forthcoming during sleep. As long as there is only the question of **illumination of the intervals of sleep**, the life of the senses, regulated by universal cosmic laws, reacts during the waking hours on the disturbed equilibrium of the soul, tending to restore the balance. That is why it is so essential that the waking life of the student should be in every respect regular and healthy. The more capable he is of meeting the demands made by the outer world upon a healthy, sound constitution of body, soul, and spirit, the better it is for him.

X: The Guardian of the Threshold

The important experiences marking the student's ascent into the higher worlds include his meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold. Strictly speaking, there are two Guardians: a lesser and a greater. The student meets the lesser Guardian when the threads connecting willing, feeling, and thinking within the finer astral and etheric bodies begin to loosen, in the way described.... **The lesser Guardian is a sovereign being.**

A truly **terrible spectral being** confronts [the student], and he will need all the presence of mind and faith in the security of his path which he has had ample opportunity to acquire in the course of his previous training.

There follows Steiner's attempt to describe the lesser Guardian, a lengthy narrative as if that entity were speaking to the initiate in a most intimidating manner. Some key phrases pertinent to the ASP experience:

“... I am that very being who shaped my body out of thy good and evil achievements. My spectral form is woven out of thine own life's record. Till now thou hast borne me invisibly within thee, and it was well that this was so; for the wisdom of thy destiny, though concealed from thee, could thus work within thee, so that the hideous stains on my form should be blotted out. Now that I have come forth from within thee, that concealed wisdom, too, has departed from thee. It will pay no further heed to thee; it will leave the work in thy hands alone. I must become a perfect and glorious being, or fall a prey to corruption; and should this occur, **I would drag thee also down with me into a dark and corrupt world....** As a form

visible to thyself I will never for an instant leave thy side, once thou hast crossed my Threshold. And in future, whenever thou dost act or think wrongly **thou wilt straightway perceive thy guilt as a hideous, demoniacal distortion of my form....**

“...my Threshold is fashioned out of all the timidity that remains in thee, out of all the dread of the strength needed to take full responsibility for all thy thoughts and actions. **As long as there remains in thee a trace of fear** of becoming thyself the guide of thine own destiny, just so long will this Threshold lack what still remains to be built into it. And as long as a single stone is found missing, just so long must thou remain standing as though transfixed; or else stumble. Seek not, then, to cross this Threshold **until thou dost feel thyself entirely free from fear and ready for the highest responsibility**. Hitherto I only emerged from thy personality when death recalled thee from an earthly life; but even then my form was veiled from thee....

“... When thou shalt have crossed my Threshold, thou wilt enter those realms to which thou hast hitherto only had access after physical death. Thou dost now enter them with full knowledge, and henceforth as thou wanderest outwardly visible upon the earth thou wilt at the same time wander in the kingdom of death, that is, in the kingdom of life eternal. **I am indeed the Angel of Death**; but I am at the same time the bearer of a higher life without end. **Through me thou wilt die with thy body still living**, to be reborn into an imperishable existence.

“Into this kingdom thou art now entering; thou wilt meet beings that are supersensible, and happiness will be thy lot. But I myself must provide thy first acquaintance with that world, and **I am thine own creation**. Formerly I drew my life from thine; but now **thou hast awakened me to a separate existence** so that I stand before thee as the visible gauge of thy future deeds—perhaps, too, as thy constant reproach. Thou hast formed me, but by so doing thou hast undertaken, as thy duty, to transform me.”

Then Steiner tries to explain in plainer language:

What is here indicated in narrative form must not be understood in the sense of an allegory, but as **an experience of the highest possible reality** befalling the esoteric student.

The Guardian must warn him not to go a step further unless he feels in himself the strength to fulfill the demands made in the above speech. **However horrible the form assumed by the Guardian, it is only the effect of the student's own past life, his own character risen out of him into independent existence**. This awakening is brought about by the separation of will, thought, and feeling. To feel for the first time that one has oneself called a spiritual being into existence is in itself an experience of deepest significance. **The student's preparation must aim at enabling him to endure the terrible sight without a trace of timidity** and, at

the moment of the meeting, to feel his strength so increased that he can undertake **fully conscious** the responsibility for transforming and beautifying the Guardian.

If successful, this meeting with the Guardian results in the student's next physical death being an entirely different event from the death as he knew it formerly. He experiences death consciously by laying aside the physical body as one discards a garment that is worn out or perhaps rendered useless through a sudden rent. Thus his physical death is of special importance only for those living with him, whose perception is still restricted to the world of the senses. For them the student dies; but for himself nothing of importance is changed in his whole environment. **The entire supersensible world stood open to him before his death, and it is this same world that now confronts him after death.**

. . . it is more than a mere symbolical expression to say that when the Guardian has enunciated his first statement, there arises from the spot where he stands a whirlwind which extinguishes all those spiritual lights that have hitherto illumined the pathway of his life. **Utter darkness**, relieved only by the rays issuing from the Guardian himself, unfolds before the student. And out of this darkness resounds the Guardian's further admonition: "Step not across my Threshold until thou dost clearly realize that thou wilt thyself illumine the darkness ahead of thee; take not a single step forward until thou art positive that thou hast sufficient oil in thine own lamp. The lamps of the guides whom thou hast hitherto followed will now no longer be available to thee." At these words, the student must turn and glance backward. The Guardian of the Threshold **now draws aside a veil which till now had concealed** deep life-mysteries. The family, national, and racial spirits are revealed to the student in their full activity, so that he perceives clearly on the one hand, how he has hitherto been led, and no less clearly on the other hand, that he will henceforward no longer enjoy this guidance. That is the second warning received at the Threshold from its Guardian.

This chapter concludes in no uncertainty stating:
Without preparation, no one could endure the sight

But when the student finds the necessary strength to venture past the Guardian:

His experience at the Threshold will then be attended by a premonition of that felicity which is to provide the keynote of his newly awakened life. The feeling of a new freedom will outweigh all other feelings....

XI: Life and Death: The Greater Guardian of the Threshold

The final chapter begins with an affirmation for readers of a physical scientific mindset—even some that have experienced ASP-- who may object to the very idea of a spiritual reality, insisting that all experience can and should be explained primarily in empirical terms.

Thanks to his insight into the supersensible world, the initiate gains a better knowledge and appreciation of the true value of visible nature than was possible before his higher training; and this may be counted among his most important experiences. Anyone not possessing this insight and perhaps therefore imagining the supersensible regions to be infinitely more valuable, is **likely to underestimate the physical world**. Yet the possessor of this insight knows that **without experience in visible reality he would be totally powerless in that other invisible reality**. Before he can live in the latter he must have the requisite faculties and instruments which can only be acquired in the visible world. **Consciousness in the invisible world** is not possible without spiritual sight, but this power of vision in the higher world **is gradually developed through experience in the lower**. No one can be born in the spiritual world with spiritual eyes without having first developed them in the physical world, any more than a child could be born with physical eyes, had they not already been formed within the mother's womb.

From this standpoint it will also be readily understood why the Threshold to the supersensible world is watched over by a Guardian. In no case may real insight into those regions be permitted to anyone lacking the requisite faculties; therefore, when at the hour of death anyone enters the other world while still incompetent to work in it, the higher experiences are shrouded from him until he is fit to behold them.

A good deal follows about the spiritual produce of human life and death, the meaning and necessity of lifetimes filled with suffering ... also the twofold nature of human being: mortal and immortal.

Thus the first Guardian confronts man as the counterpart of his two-fold nature in which perishable and imperishable are blended; and it stands clearly proved how far removed he still is from attaining that sublime luminous figure which may again dwell in the pure, spiritual world. The extent to which he is entangled in the physical sense-world is exposed to the student's view. The presence of instincts, impulses, desires, egotistical wishes and all forms of selfishness, and so forth, expresses itself in this entanglement, as it does further in his membership in a race, a nation, and so forth; for peoples and races are but steps leading to pure humanity.... In a similar way, **the pilgrimage through ever purer forms of morality and religion is a perfecting process**

Now in the Guardian of the Threshold as described above, the product of the past is manifest, containing only so many seeds of the future as could be planted in the course of time. Yet everything that can be extracted from the sense-world must be carried into the supersensible world.... For this reason the lesser Guardian of the Threshold is joined, after a time, by the greater Guardian. The meeting with the second Guardian will again be described in narrative form.

When the student has recognized all the elements from which he must liberate himself, his way is barred by a sublime luminous being whose beauty is difficult to

describe in the words of human language.... [The human soul] is now confronted by the second Guardian of the Threshold who speaks as follows:

Another long narrative, this time a more god-like entity challenging the initiate to join his efforts with and for the sake of all who have gone before.

“Thou must now share with thy fellows the powers which, together with them, thou didst acquire. I shall therefore bar thine entry into the higher regions of the supersensible world so long as thou hast not applied all the powers thou hast acquired to the liberation of thy companions. With the powers already at thy disposal thou mayst sojourn in the lower regions of the supersensible world; but I stand before the portal of the higher regions as the Cherub with the fiery sword before Paradise, and I bar thine entrance as long as powers unused in the sense-world still remain in thee. And if thou dost refuse to apply thy powers in this world, others will come who will not refuse; and a higher supersensible world will receive all the fruits of the sense-world, while thou wilt lose from under thy feet the very ground in which thou wert rooted. The purified world will develop above and beyond thee, and thou shalt be excluded from it. Thus thou wouldst tread the *black path*, while the others from whom thou didst sever thyself tread the *white path*.”

With these words the greater Guardian makes his presence known soon after the meeting with the first Guardian has taken place. The initiate knows full well what is in store for him if he yields to the temptation of a premature abode in the supersensible world. An indescribable splendor shines forth from the second Guardian of the Threshold; union with him looms as a far distant ideal before the soul's vision. Yet there is also the certitude that this union will not be possible until all the powers afforded by this world are applied to the task of its liberation and redemption. By fulfilling the demands of the higher light-being the initiate will contribute to the liberation of the human race. He lays his gifts on the sacrificial altar of humanity. Should he prefer his own premature elevation into the supersensible world, the stream of human evolution will flow over and past him. After his liberation he can gain no new powers from the world of the senses; and if he places his work at the world's disposal it will entail his renouncement of any further benefit for himself.

Now for the reader interested in the preliminary chapters of Steiner's training guide, abbreviated as much as I dare:

Chapter I: How Is Knowledge of the Higher Worlds Attained? Conditions

There slumber in every human being faculties by means of which he can acquire for himself a knowledge of higher worlds. Mystics, Gnostics, Theosophists [like

evangelical Christians] — all speak of a world of soul and spirit which for them is just as real as the world we see with our physical eyes and touch with our physical hands....

One might even describe the worldviews of psychiatrists and quantum physicists this way. I added 'evangelical Christians', because that was my first orientation. Unlike the others listed, Christians assume (as per the physical world) that parallel dimensions of soul and spirit are thought and spoken into existence by the prime Author, the original I AM. Just so, my own inner soul experience is the creation of my self, the innermost sanctity from which I name myself "I". Personality cannot spring from impersonality, just as life can only beget life —or so the biologists tell us. I find that I am, therefore God must be the first to name Himself I. Steiner also believed this, though his orientation was not necessarily Christian. Look for my later presentation of Steiner's book Christianity as Mystical Fact, wherein he clearly distinguishes his spiritual worldview from the impersonal, Godless and Christless views of Pantheists, Mystics, Gnostics, and Theosophists.

As long as the human race has existed there has always been a method of training, in the course of which individuals possessing these higher faculties gave instruction to others who were in search of them. Such a training is called occult (esoteric) training, and the instruction received therefrom is called occult (esoteric) teaching, or spiritual science. This designation naturally awakens misunderstanding....

In this context, occult does not mean forbidden arts, sorcery, witchcraft, druidic or ancient Babylonian rites. It does mean secret, in that it is historically a guarded set of teachings sought by only a few of any generation, not necessarily that it was withheld from public knowledge. Seekers are qualified for training because they show the requisite interest. Though some are lucky (or cursed) to be born with unusual propensity to clairvoyance. Some are predisposed by accident or circumstance to brief spells of spiritual awareness, however lacking in proper preparation for true spiritual cognition.

The question may be raised: how ... are the uninitiated to develop any human interest in this so-called esoteric knowledge? How and why are they to seek for something of whose nature they can form no idea? Such a question is based upon an entirely erroneous conception of the real nature of esoteric knowledge. There is, in truth, no difference between esoteric knowledge and all the rest of man's knowledge and proficiency. This esoteric knowledge is no more of a secret for the average human being than writing is a secret for those who have never learned it. And just as all can learn to write who choose the correct method, so, too, can all who seek

the right way become esoteric students and even teachers. In one respect only do the conditions here differ from those that apply to external knowledge and proficiency. The possibility of acquiring the art of writing may be withheld from someone through poverty, or through the conditions of civilization into which he is born; but for the attainment of knowledge and proficiency in the higher worlds, there is no obstacle for those who earnestly seek them.

The methods by which a student is prepared for the reception of higher knowledge are minutely prescribed. The direction he is to take is traced with unfading, everlasting letters in the worlds of the spirit where the initiates guard the higher secrets. In ancient times, anterior to our history, the temples of the spirit were also outwardly visible; today, because our life has become so unspiritual, they are not to be found in the world visible to external sight; yet they are present spiritually everywhere, and all who seek may find them.

Only within his own soul can a man find the means to unseal the lips of an initiate. He must develop within himself certain faculties to a definite degree, and then the highest treasures of the spirit can become his own.

He must begin with a certain fundamental attitude of soul. In spiritual science this fundamental attitude is called the *path of veneration*, of devotion to truth and knowledge. Without this attitude no one can become a student. The disposition shown in their childhood by subsequent students of higher knowledge is well known to the experienced in these matters. There are children who look up with religious awe to those whom they venerate ... What was once a childlike veneration for persons becomes, later, **a veneration for truth and knowledge**. Experience teaches that they can best hold their heads erect who have learnt to venerate where veneration is due; and veneration is always fitting when it flows from the depths of the heart.

If we do not develop within ourselves this deeply rooted feeling that there is something higher than ourselves, we shall never find the strength to evolve to something higher. The initiate has only acquired the strength to lift his head to the heights of knowledge by guiding his heart to the depths of veneration and devotion. The heights of the spirit can only be climbed by passing through the portals of humility. You can only acquire right knowledge when you have learnt to esteem it.

The student who is gifted with this feeling, or who is fortunate enough to have had it inculcated in a suitable education, brings a great deal along with him when, later in life, he seeks admittance to higher knowledge. Failing such preparation, he will encounter difficulties at the very first step, unless he undertakes, by rigorous self-education, to create within himself this inner life of devotion. In our time it is especially important that full attention be paid to this point. **Our civilization tends more toward critical judgment and condemnation than toward devotion and selfless veneration. Our children already criticize far more than they worship. But every criticism, every adverse judgment passed, disperses the powers of**

the soul for the attainment of higher knowledge in the same measure that all veneration and reverence develops them. In this we do not wish to say anything against our civilization. There is no question here of leveling criticism against it. To this critical faculty, this self-conscious human judgment, this “test all things and hold fast what is best,” we owe the greatness of our civilization. Man could never have attained to the science, the industry, the commerce, the right relationships of our time, had he not applied to all things the standard of his critical judgment. But what we have thereby gained in external culture we have had to pay for with a corresponding loss of higher knowledge of spiritual life. It must be emphasized that **higher knowledge is not concerned with the veneration of persons but the veneration of truth and knowledge.**

Now, the one thing that everyone must acknowledge is the difficulty for those involved in the external civilization of our time to advance to the knowledge of the higher worlds. They can only do so if they work energetically at themselves. At a time when the conditions of material life were simpler, the attainment of spiritual knowledge was also easier. Objects of veneration and worship stood out in clearer relief from the ordinary things of the world. **In an epoch of criticism ideals are lowered; other feelings take the place of veneration, respect, adoration, and wonder.** Our own age thrusts these feelings further and further into the background, so that they can only be conveyed to man through his every-day life in a very small degree.

*Steiner wrote this almost 100 years ago. Perhaps criticism, as a societal standard, has finally castrated itself. It often seems that our modern age of criticism has outright abandoned the quest for truth, honor, beauty, excellence and meaning. While any one person's ideal is “okay” so long as he keeps it to himself, that same set of ideas becomes fair game when held up publicly as a common standard. The standard-bearer becomes the target of general judgement, and stands convicted of the worst of social crimes –intolerance (another word for judgmentalism)—because he dared to declare and revere something immaterial, spiritual, a standard higher even than his fellow man. Media, educators, artists from diverse backgrounds will suddenly seem to march in unison, campaigning incessantly against the very idea of a shared ideal, until they believe it is finally shot dead. The only truth is a common need for NO truth, no guilt, no judgement and no penalty ... unless, of course, one commits the unpardonable: confessing and **repenting** of his own sin. What an arrogant fool. What a spoiler, traitor, clown. Nobody deserves to die, except he who dares to suggest that we all are deserving, ultimately, of death.*

Whoever seeks higher knowledge must [assemble] it for himself. He must instill it into his soul. **It cannot be done by study; it can only be done through life.**

Whoever, therefore, wishes to become a student of higher knowledge must assiduously cultivate this inner life of devotion. **Everywhere in his environment and his experiences he must seek motives of admiration and homage.** If I meet a man and blame him for his shortcomings, I rob myself of power to attain higher knowledge; but if I try to enter lovingly into his merits, I gather such power. The student must continually be intent upon following this advice... **He must be wary of thoughts of disrespect, of adverse criticism,** existing in his consciousness, and he must endeavor straightaway to **cultivate thoughts of devotion.**

It is well known to those experienced in these matters that in every such moment powers are awakened which otherwise remain dormant. **In this way the spiritual eyes of man are opened. He begins to see things around him which he could not have seen before.** He begins to understand that hitherto he had only seen a part of the world around him. A human being standing before him now presents a new and different aspect.

It is not easy, at first, to believe that feelings like reverence and respect have anything to do with cognition. This is due to the fact that we are inclined to set cognition aside as a faculty by itself — one that stands in no relation to what otherwise occurs in the soul. In so thinking we do not bear in mind that it is the soul which exercises the faculty of cognition; and feelings are for the soul what food is for the body. If we give the body stones in place of bread, its activity will cease. It is the same with the soul. Veneration, homage, devotion are like nutriment making it healthy and strong, especially strong for the activity of cognition. **Disrespect, antipathy, underestimation of what deserves recognition, all exert a paralyzing and withering effect on this faculty of cognition.** For the spiritually experienced this fact is visible in the aura. A soul which harbors feelings of reverence and devotion produces a change in its aura. Certain spiritual colorings, as they may be called, yellow-red and brown-red in tone, vanish and are replaced by blue-red tints. Thereby the cognitional faculty is ripened; it receives intelligence of facts in its environment of which it had hitherto no idea. **Reverence awakens in the soul a sympathetic power through which we attract qualities in the beings around us, which would otherwise remain concealed.**

The power obtained through devotion can be rendered still **more effective when the life of feeling is enriched by** yet another quality. This consists in giving oneself up less and less to impressions of the outer world, and to ***develop instead a vivid inner life.*** A person who darts from one impression of the outer world to another, who constantly seeks distraction, cannot find the way to higher knowledge... **Only what we experience within ourselves unlocks for us the beauties of the outer world.** One person sails across the ocean, and only a few inward experiences pass through his soul; another will hear the eternal language of the cosmic spirit; **for him are unveiled the mysterious riddles of existence.** We must learn to remain in touch with our own feelings and ideas if we wish to develop any intimate

relationship with the outer world. The outer world with all its phenomena is filled with splendor, but we must have experienced the divine within ourselves before we can hope to discover it in our environment.

The student is told to **set apart moments in his daily life in which to withdraw into himself, quietly and alone**. He is not to occupy himself at such moments with the affairs of his own ego. This would result in the contrary of what is intended. He should rather let his experiences and the messages from the outer world re-echo within his own completely silent self. **At such silent moments every flower, every animal, every action will unveil to him secrets undreamt of. And thus he will prepare himself to receive quite new impressions of the outer world through quite different eyes.** The desire to enjoy impression after impression merely blunts the faculty of cognition; the latter, however, is nurtured and cultivated if the enjoyment once experienced is allowed to reveal its message. Thus the student must accustom himself not merely to let the enjoyment reverberate, as it were, but rather to renounce any further enjoyment, and work upon the past experience. The peril here is very great. Instead of working inwardly, **it is very easy to fall into the opposite habit of trying to exploit the enjoyment**. Let no one underestimate the fact that immense sources of error here confront the student. **He must pass through a host of tempters** of his soul. They would all harden his ego and imprison it within itself... **The student of higher knowledge considers enjoyment only as a means** of ennobling himself for the world. Enjoyment is to him like a scout informing him about the world; but once instructed by enjoyment, he passes on to work. He does not learn in order to accumulate learning as his own treasure, but in order that he may devote his learning to the service of the world.

*Steiner next attempts to present more practical rules for the student determined to **tread the path of veneration and develop the inner life**.*

Inner Tranquility

These practical rules have no arbitrary origin. They rest upon ancient experience and ancient wisdom, and are given out in the same manner, wheresoever the ways to higher knowledge are indicated. All true teachers of the spiritual life are in agreement as to the substance of these rules, even though they do not always clothe them in the same words. This difference, which is of a minor character and is more apparent than real, is due to circumstances which need not be dwelt upon here.

One of the first of these rules: **Provide for yourself moments of inner tranquility, and in these moments learn to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential.**

The student must set aside a small part of his daily life in which to concern himself with something quite different from the objects of his daily occupation.... Should anyone really have no more time at his disposal, five minutes a day will suffice. It all depends on the manner in which these five minutes are spent.

During these periods the student should wrest himself entirely free from his work-a-day life. His thoughts and feelings should take on a different coloring. His joys and sorrows, his cares, experiences and actions must pass in review before his soul; and he must adopt such a position that he may regard all his sundry experiences from a higher point of view.... Our aim in these moments of seclusion must be so to **contemplate and judge our own actions and experiences as though they applied not to ourselves but to some other person....** If we attain the calm inner survey, **the essential is severed from the non-essential.** Sorrow and joy, every thought, every resolve, appear different when we confront ourselves in this way.... It should be attempted by the student in connection with the events of destiny already experienced in the past [rather than with present occurrences]. The value of such inner tranquil self-contemplation depends far less on what is actually contemplated than on our finding within ourselves the power which such inner tranquility develops.

For every human being bears a higher man within himself besides what we may call the work-a-day man. This higher man remains hidden until he is awakened. And each human being can himself alone awaken this higher being within himself.... **To all who thus persevere the day will come when spiritual light will envelop them, and a new world will be revealed to an organ of sight of whose presence within them they were never aware.**

Little by little this higher life will make its influence felt on his ordinary life. The tranquility of the moments set apart will also affect everyday existence. In his whole being he will grow calmer; **he will attain firm assurance in all his actions,** and cease to be put out of countenance by all manner of incidents. By thus advancing he will gradually become more and more his own guide, and allow himself less and **less to be led by circumstances and external influences.** He will soon discover how great a source of strength is available to him in these moments thus set apart. He will begin no longer to get angry at things which formerly annoyed him; countless things he formerly feared cease to alarm him. He acquires a new outlook on life.... And thus thought after thought, each fraught with advantage to his whole life, flows into the student's outlook. They take the place of those that had a hampering, weakening effect. He begins to steer his own ship on a secure course through the waves of life, whereas it was formerly battered to and fro by these waves.

This calm and serenity react on the whole being. They assist the growth of the inner man, and, with the inner man, those faculties also grow which lead to higher knowledge. For it is by his progress in this direction that **the student gradually reaches the point where he himself determines the manner in which the impressions of the outer world shall affect him.** Thus he may hear a word spoken with the object of wounding or vexing him. Formerly it would indeed have wounded or vexed him, but now that he treads the path to higher knowledge, he is

able — before the word has found its way to his inner self — to take from it the sting which gives it the power to wound or vex....

Now, the scope and significance of these facts must be realized. We must bear in mind that **the higher man within us is in constant development**. But only the state of calm and serenity here described renders an orderly development possible. The waves of outward life constrain the inner man from all sides if, instead of mastering this outward life, it masters him. Such a man is like a plant which tries to expand in a cleft in the rock and is stunted in growth until new space is given it. **No outward forces can supply space to the inner man. It can only be supplied by the inner calm which man himself gives to his soul.** Outward circumstances can only alter the course of his outward life; they can never awaken the inner spiritual man. **The student must himself give birth to a new and higher man within himself.**

This higher man now becomes the inner ruler who directs the circumstances of the outer man with sure guidance. As long as the outer man has the upper hand and control, this inner man is his slave and therefore cannot unfold his powers. If it depends on something other than myself whether I should get angry or not, I am not master of myself, or, to put it better, I have not yet found the ruler within myself. I must develop the faculty of letting the impressions of the outer world approach me only in the way in which I myself determine; then only do I become in the real sense a student. And only in as far as the student earnestly seeks this power can he reach the goal. It is of no importance how far anyone can go in a given time; the point is that he should earnestly seek. **Many have striven for years without noticing any appreciable progress; but many of those who did not despair, but remained unshaken, have then quite suddenly achieved the inner victory.**

But only one side of the student's inner activity is characterized by this birth of his own high being. Something else is needed in addition. Even if he confronts himself as a stranger it is only himself that he contemplates; he looks on those experiences and actions with which he is connected through his particular station of life. **He must now disengage himself from it and rise beyond to a purely human level, which no longer has anything to do with his own special situation. He must pass on to the contemplation of those things which would concern him as a human being, even if he lived under quite different circumstances and in quite a different situation.** In this way something begins to live within him which ranges above the purely personal. His gaze is directed to worlds higher than those with which every-day life connects him. And thus he begins to feel and realize, as an inner experience, that he belongs to those higher worlds. These are worlds concerning which his senses and his daily occupation can tell him nothing. Thus he now shifts the central point of his being to the inner part of his nature. He listens to the voices within him which speak to him in his moments of tranquility; he cultivates an intercourse with the spiritual world. He is removed from the every-day world. Its noise is silenced. All around him there is silence. **He puts away**

everything that reminds him of such impressions from without. Calm inward contemplation and converse with the purely spiritual world fill his soul. — **Such tranquil contemplation must become a natural necessity in the life of the student.** He is now plunged in a world of thought. He must develop a living feeling for this silent thought-activity. He must learn to love what the spirit pours into him. He will soon cease to feel that this thought-world is less real than the every-day things which surround him. **He begins to deal with his thoughts as with things in space, and the moment approaches when he begins to feel that which reveals itself in the silent inward thought-world to be much higher, much more real, than the things in space. He discovers that something living expresses itself in this thought-world. He sees that his thoughts do not merely harbor shadow-pictures, but that through them hidden beings speak to him.** Out of the silence, speech becomes audible to him. Formerly sound only reached him through his ear; now it resounds through his soul. An inner language, an inner word is revealed to him. This moment, when first experienced, is one of greatest rapture for the student. **An inner light is shed over the whole external world, and a second life begins for him. Through his being there pours a divine stream from a world of divine rapture.**

This meditation [contemplative reflection] is the means to supersensible knowledge. But the student in such moments must not merely indulge in feelings; he must not have indefinite sensations in his soul. That would only hinder him from reaching true spiritual knowledge. **His thoughts must be clear, sharp and definite, and he will be helped in this if he does not cling blindly to the thoughts that rise within him. Rather must he permeate himself with the lofty thoughts by which men already advanced and possessed of the spirit were inspired at such moments.** He should start with the writings which themselves had their origin in just such revelation during meditation.... The seekers of the spirit have themselves set down in such writings the thoughts of the divine science which the Spirit has directed his messengers to proclaim to the world.

Through such meditation a complete transformation takes place in the student. **He begins to form quite new conceptions of reality.** All things acquire a fresh value for him. It cannot be repeated too often that this transformation does not alienate him from the world. He will in no way be estranged from his daily tasks and duties, for **he comes to realize that the most insignificant action he has to accomplish, the most insignificant experience which offers itself to him, stands in connection with cosmic beings and cosmic events.** When once this connection is revealed to him in his moments of contemplation, he comes to his daily activities with a new, fuller power. For now **he knows that his labor and his suffering are given and endured for the sake of a great, spiritual, cosmic whole.** Not weariness, but strength to live springs from meditation.

When, by means of meditation, a man rises to union with the spirit, he brings to life the eternal in him, which is limited by neither birth nor death. The existence of this eternal being can only be doubted by those who have not themselves experienced it.

Thus **meditation is the way which also leads man to the knowledge, to the contemplation of his eternal, indestructible, essential being....** The question is often asked: Why does a man know nothing of his experiences beyond the borders of life and death? Not thus should we ask, but rather: How can we attain such knowledge? In right meditation the path is opened. This alone can **revive the memory of experiences beyond the border of life and death. Everyone can attain this knowledge ... Only the right means must be chosen.** Only a being with ears and eyes can apprehend sounds and colors; nor can the eye perceive if the light which makes things visible is wanting. Spiritual Science gives **the means of developing the spiritual ears and eyes, and of kindling the spiritual light;** and this method of spiritual training may be described as consisting of **three stages:** (1) **Preparation;** this develops the spiritual senses. (2) **Enlightenment;** this kindles the spiritual light. (3) **Initiation;** this establishes intercourse with the higher spiritual beings.

II: The Stages of Initiation

Certain exercises enable the soul to attain to a **conscious intercourse with the spiritual world.** These exercises bear about the same relation to what will be imparted in the following pages, as the instruction given in a higher strictly disciplined school bears to the incidental training. But impatient dabbling, devoid of earnest perseverance, can lead to nothing at all.

It is not altogether necessary that the first of these three stages should be completed before the second can be begun, nor that the second, in turn, be completed before the third be started. In certain respects **it is possible to partake of enlightenment, and even of initiation, and in other respects still be in the preparatory stage.** Yet it will be necessary to spend a certain time in the stage of preparation before any enlightenment can begin; and, at least in some respects, enlightenment must be completed before it is even possible to enter upon the stage of initiation. But in describing them it is necessary, for the sake of clarity, that the three stages be made to follow in order.

*I highlight the above as further indication that I (and fellow ASP veterans) may have embarked **accidentally** upon the road to spiritual cognition. For some sufferers, the light never comes on, perhaps encountering it only once or twice in lifetime. For them the ASP experience remains at the stage of naked self-awareness during paralysis with perhaps some other blind sensations –inner voices, tones, vibrations, feeling or just knowing a threatening presence, floating or sinking into a vortex—yet vision remains dark, void as all external physical sensation. For many, however, there comes a moment when vision returns, usually concurrent with some form of movement. It may be experienced as a “false awakening”, or the*

sleeper may realize immediately that only a dream body could behold such wonders or survive such travel. Yet the clarity of self-awareness is so intense as to defy any previous definition of dreaming. It would appear that I, like the fabled Alice, had stumbled into another world where the normal physical rules of existence don't apply. Nor was I properly prepared to deal with things and beings encountered there as realities in their own right. There was always the feeling that maybe I didn't belong there ... not yet.

Preparation

Preparation consists in a strict and definite cultivation of the life of thought and feeling, through which the psycho-spiritual body becomes equipped with higher senses and organs of activity in the same way that natural forces have fitted the physical body with organs built out of indeterminate living matter.

To begin with, the **attention of the soul is directed to certain events** in the world that surrounds us. Such events are, **on the one hand, life that is budding, growing, and flourishing, and on the other hand, all phenomena connected with fading, decaying, and withering.** The student can observe these events simultaneously, wherever he turns his eyes and on every occasion they naturally evoke in him feelings and thoughts; but in ordinary circumstances he does not devote himself sufficiently to them. He hurries on too quickly from impression to impression. It is necessary, therefore, that he should fix his attention intently and consciously upon these phenomena. Wherever he observes a definite kind of blooming and flourishing, he must banish everything else from his soul, and **entirely surrender himself, for a short time, to this one impression.** He will soon convince himself that a feeling which heretofore in a similar case, would merely have flitted through his soul, now swells out and **assumes a powerful and energetic form.**

The point is that the attention should be directed with perfect inner balance upon both phenomena. If the necessary tranquility be attained and you surrender yourself to the feeling which expands to life in the soul, then, in due time, the following experience will ensue. **Thoughts and feelings of a new kind and unknown before will be noticed uprising in the soul.** Indeed, the more often the attention be fixed alternately upon something growing, blossoming and flourishing, and upon something else that is fading and decaying, the more vivid will these feelings become. And just as the eyes and ears of the physical body are built by natural forces out of living matter, so will **the organs of clairvoyance build themselves out of the feelings and thoughts thus evoked.**

A new world is opened to the student if he systematically and deliberately surrenders himself to such feelings. The soul-world, the so-called astral plane, begins to dawn upon him. Growth and decay are no longer facts which make indefinite impressions on him as of old, but rather they form themselves into **spiritual lines and figures of which he had previously suspected nothing.** And

these lines and figures have, for the different phenomena, different forms. A blooming flower, an animal in the process of growth, a tree that is decaying, evoke in his soul different lines. The soul world (astral plane) broadens out slowly before him. These lines and figures are in no sense arbitrary...just as the forms of animals and plants are described in ordinary natural history, so too, the spiritual scientist describes or draws the **spiritual forms of the process of growth and decay, according to species and kind.**

If the student has progressed so far that he can perceive the spiritual forms of those phenomena which are physically visible to his external sight, he is then not far from the stage where **he will behold things which have no physical existence**, and which therefore remain entirely hidden (occult) from those who have not received suitable instruction and training.

He should not try to make out, through intellectual speculation, the *meaning* of things, but rather allow the things to disclose themselves.... Artistic feeling, when coupled with a quiet introspective nature, forms the best preliminary condition for the development of spiritual faculties. This feeling pierces through the superficial aspect of things, and in so doing touches their secrets.

It is interesting that Steiner would warn against intellectualizing the content of spiritual vision. This is the first impulse, to interpret ASP experiences via psychoanalytic symbolism or even applying a biblical framework. These preconceptions only confuse the real significance of spiritual phenomena and distract from the focus needed to grasp the actual rules of engagement in that world, as follows.

A further point of importance is what spiritual science calls **orientation** in the higher worlds. This is attained when the student is permeated, through and through, with **the conscious realization that feelings and thoughts are just as much veritable realities as are tables and chairs in the world of the physical senses.** In the soul and thought world, feelings and thoughts react upon each other just as do physical objects in the physical world. As long as the student is not vividly permeated with this consciousness, he will not believe that a wrong thought in his mind [damages other] thoughts in the thought world [that would otherwise spread life, that the result may be as devastating] as the effect wrought by a bullet fired at random upon the physical objects it hits. He will perhaps never allow himself to perform a physically visible action which he considers to be wrong, though he will not shrink from harboring wrong thoughts and feelings, for these appear harmless to the rest of the world. **There can be no progress, however, on the path to higher knowledge unless we guard our thoughts and feelings in just the same way we guard out steps in the physical world.** If we see a wall before us, we do not attempt to dash right through it, but turn aside. In other words, we guide ourselves by the laws of the physical world. There are such laws, too, for the soul and thought world, only they cannot impose themselves on us from without. They must flow out

of the life of the soul itself. This can be attained if we forbid ourselves to harbor wrong thoughts and feelings. **All arbitrary flitting to and fro in thought, all accidental ebbing and flowing of emotion must be forbidden in the same way.** In so doing we do not become deficient in feeling. On the contrary, if we regulate our inner life in this way, **we shall soon find ourselves becoming rich in feelings and creative with genuine imagination.** In the place of petty emotionalism and capricious flights of thought, **there appear significant emotions and thoughts that are fruitful.** Feelings and thoughts of this kind lead the student to orientation in the spiritual world. He **gains a right position in relation to the things of the spiritual world**; a distinct and definite result comes into effect in his favor. Just as he is a physical man, finds his way among physical things, so, too, his path now leads him between growth and decay, which he has already come to know in the way described above. On the one hand, he follows all processes of growing and flourishing and, on the other, of withering and decaying **in a way that is necessary for his own and the world's advancement.**

The student has also to bestow a further care on the *world of sound*. He must **discriminate between sounds** that are produced by the so-called inert (lifeless) bodies, for instance, a bell, or a musical instrument, or a falling mass, and **those which proceed from a living creature** (an animal or a human being.) When a bell is struck, we hear the sound and connect a pleasant feeling with it; but when we hear the cry of an animal, we can, besides our own feeling, **detect through it the manifestation of an inward experience** of the animal, **whether of pleasure or pain.** It is with the latter kind of sound that the student sets to work. He must concentrate his whole attention on the fact that the sound tells him of something that lies outside his own soul. He must immerse himself in this foreign thing. He must closely unite his own feeling with the pleasure or pain of which the sound tells him. He must get beyond the point of caring whether, for him, the sound is pleasant or unpleasant, agreeable or disagreeable, and **his soul must be filled with whatever is occurring in the being from which the sound proceeds.** Through such exercises, if systematically and deliberately performed, the student will develop within himself the faculty of **intermingling, as it were, with the being** from which the sound proceeds.... Through her resounding tones, **the whole of nature begins to whisper her secrets to the student.** What was hitherto merely incomprehensible noise to his soul becomes by this means a coherent language of nature. And whereas hitherto he only heard sound from the so-called inanimate objects, **he now is aware of a new language of the soul.** Should he advance further in this inner culture, he will soon learn that he can hear what hitherto he did not even surmise. He **begins to hear with the soul.**

To this, one thing more must be added before the highest point in this region can be attained. **Of very great importance for the development of the student is the way in which he listens to others when they speak. He must accustom himself to do this in such a way that, while listening, his inner self is absolutely silent....** Many people in such cases feel themselves impelled to an expression of their assent, or more especially, of their dissent. In the student, all such assent or

dissent must be silenced.... In spiritual research this is systematically practiced. The student feels it his duty to [practice listening] at certain times to the most contradictory views and, at the same time, bring entirely to silence all dissent, and more especially, all adverse criticism. **The point is that in so doing, not only all purely intellectual judgment be silenced, but also all feelings of displeasure, denial, or even dissent....** He must listen, for example, to the statements of people who are, in some respects, far beneath him, and yet while doing so **suppress every feeling of greater knowledge or superiority**. It is useful for everyone to listen in this way to children, for even the wisest can learn incalculably much from children. The student can thus train himself to listen to the words of others quite selflessly, completely shutting down his own person and his opinions and way of feeling. When he practices listening without criticism, even when a completely contradictory opinion is advanced, when the most hopeless mistake is committed before him, **he then learns, little by little, to blend himself with the being of another and become identified with it**. Then he hears through the words into the soul of the other. Through continued exercise of this kind, **sound becomes the right medium for the perception of soul and spirit**. Of course it implies the very strictest self-discipline, but the latter leads to a high goal. When these exercises are practiced in connection with the other already given, dealing with the sounds of nature, **the soul develops a new sense of hearing**. She is now able to perceive manifestations from the spiritual world which do not find their expression in sounds perceptible to the physical ear. **The perception of the "inner word" awakens**. Gradually truths reveal themselves to the student from the spiritual world. He hears speech uttered to him in a spiritual way.... **As long as one hurls any personal opinion or feeling against the speaker to whom one must listen, the beings of the spiritual world remain silent**.

To the practice of all that has here been indicated must be added **the ardent study of what the spiritual researchers impart to the world**. In all esoteric training such study belongs to the preparatory period, and all other methods will prove ineffective if due receptivity for the teachings of the spiritual researcher is lacking. For since these instructions are culled from the living inner word, from the living inwardly instilled speech, [the very words of instruction] are themselves gifted with spiritual life. They are **not mere words; they are living powers**. And while you follow the words of one who knows, while you read a book that springs from real inner experience, powers are at work in your soul which make you clairvoyant, just as natural forces have created out of living matter your eyes and your ears.

Enlightenment

Enlightenment proceeds from very simple processes. Here, too, it is a matter of developing certain feelings and thoughts which slumber in every human being and must be awakened. It is only when these simple processes are carried out with unflinching patience, continuously and conscientiously, that they can lead to the perception of the inner light-forms. **The first step is taken by observing different natural objects in a particular way**; for instance, a transparent and beautifully formed stone (a crystal), a plant, and an animal. The student should endeavor, at

first, **to direct his whole attention to a comparison** of the stone with the animal in the following manner. The thoughts here mentioned should pass through his soul accompanied by vivid feelings, and no other thought, no other feeling, must mingle with them and disturb what should be an intensely attentive observation. The student says to himself: “The stone has a form; the animal also has a form. The stone remains motionless in its place. The animal changes its place. It is instinct (desire) which causes the animal to change its place. Instincts, too, are served by the form of the animal. Its organs and limbs are not fashioned in accordance with desires, but in accordance with desireless force.”

By sinking deeply into such thoughts, and while doing so, observing the stone and the animal with rapt attention, there arise in the soul two quite separate kinds of feelings. **From the stone there flows into the soul the one kind of feeling, and from the animal the other kind.** The attempt will probably not succeed at first, but little by little, with genuine and patient practice, these feelings ensue. Only, this exercise must be practiced over and over again. At first the feelings are only present as long as the observation lasts. Later on they continue, and then they grow to something which remains living in the soul. The student has then but to reflect, and both feelings will always arise, even without the contemplation of an external object. Out of these feelings and the thoughts that are bound up with them, the organs of clairvoyance are formed. If the plant should then be included in this observation, it will be noticed that the feeling flowing from it lies between the feelings derived from the stone and the animal, in both quality and degree. The organs thus formed are spiritual eyes. The students gradually learns, by their means, to see something like soul and spirit colors. **The spiritual world with its lines and figures remains dark as long as he has only attained what has been described as preparation; through enlightenment this world becomes light.** Here it must also be noted that the words “dark” and “light,” as well as the other expressions used, only approximately describe what is meant. This cannot be otherwise if ordinary language is used, for this language was created to suit physical conditions. Spiritual science describes that which, for clairvoyant organs, flows from the stone, as blue, or blue-red; and that which is felt as coming from the animal as red or red-yellow. In reality, colors of a spiritual kind are seen. The color proceeding the plant is green which little by little turns into a light ethereal pink. The plant is actually that product of nature which in higher worlds resembles, in certain respects, its constitution in the physical world. The same does not apply to the stone and the animal. It must now be clearly understood that the above-mentioned colors only represent the principal shades in the stone, plant and animal kingdom. In reality, all possible intermediate shades are present. **Every stone, every plant, every animal has its own particular shade of color. In addition to these there are also the beings of the higher worlds who never incarnate physically, but who have their colors, often wonderful, often horrible. Indeed, the wealth of color in these higher worlds is immeasurably greater than in the physical world.**

Once the faculty of seeing with spiritual eyes has been acquired, one then encounters sooner or later the beings here mentioned, some of them higher, some lower than man himself--beings that never enter physical reality.

In our time the path to spiritual science is sought by many. It is sought in many ways, and many dangerous and even despicable practices are attempted. It is for this reason that they who claim to know something of the truth in these matters place before others the possibility of learning something of esoteric training. Only so much is here imparted as accords with this possibility. **It is necessary that something of the truth should become known, in order to prevent error causing great harm. No harm can come to anyone following the way here described, so long as he does not force matters. Only, one thing should be noted: no student should spend more time and strength upon these exercises than he can spare with due regard to his station in life and to his duties; nor should he change anything, for the time being, in the external conditions of his life through taking this path. Without patience no genuine results can be attained.** After doing an exercise for a few minutes, the student must be able to stop and continue quietly his daily work, and not thought of these exercises should mingle with the day's work. NO one is of use as an esoteric student or will ever attain results of real value who has not learned **to wait in the highest and best sense of the word.**

The Control of Thoughts and Feelings

The powers and faculties to be developed are of a most subtle kind, and differ entirely in their nature from the [physical world] conceptions previously formed by the student.... It is therefore not surprising if he does not immediately notice the powers of soul and spirit now developing in him.... Many abandon the path to higher knowledge soon after having set foot upon it, because their progress is not immediately apparent to them. And even **when the first experiences begin to dawn upon the pupil, he is apt to regard them as illusions**, because he had formed quite different conceptions of what he was going to experience. He loses courage, either because he regards these first experiences as being of no value, or because they appear to him to be so insignificant that he cannot believe they will lead him to any appreciable results within a measurable time. **Courage and self-confidence are two beacons which must never be extinguished on the path to higher knowledge....**

It is imperative to extirpate the idea that any fantastic, mysterious practices are required for the attainment of higher knowledge. It must be clearly realized that a start has to be made with the [ordinary] thoughts and feelings with which we continually live, and that these feelings and thoughts must merely be given a new direction. Everyone must say to himself: *"In my own world of thought and feeling the deepest mysteries lie hidden, only hitherto I have been unable to perceive them."* In the end it all resolves itself into the fact that man ordinarily carries body, soul and spirit about with him, and yet is conscious in a true sense only of his body, and not of his soul and spirit. **The student becomes conscious of soul and spirit,**

just as the ordinary person is conscious of his body. Hence it is highly important to give the proper direction to thoughts and feelings, for then only can the perception be developed of all that is invisible in ordinary life....

Steiner next narrates an introductory meditation, learning to distinguish, using psycho-spiritual senses, between a live plant seed and an artificial imitation:

“All that will ultimately grow out of the seed is now secretly enfolded within it as the force of the whole plant. In the artificial imitation of the seed there is no such force present. And yet both appear alike to my eyes. **The real seed, therefore, contains something invisible which is not present in the imitation.**” It is on this invisible something that thought and feeling are to be concentrated....

Let the student fully realize that this invisible something will transmute itself later on into a visible plant, which he will have before him in its shape and color. Let him ponder on the thought: “The invisible will become visible. If I could not think, then that which will only become visible later on could not already make its presence felt to me.” Particular stress must be laid on the following point: **what the student thinks he must also feel with intensity.** In inner tranquility, the thought mentioned above must become a conscious inner experience, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and disturbances. And sufficient time must be taken to allow the thought and the feeling which is coupled with it to bore themselves into the soul, as it were. If this be accomplished in the right way, then after a time—possibly not until after numerous attempts — **an inner force will make itself felt. This force will create new powers of perception.** The grain of seed will appear as if enveloped in a small luminous cloud. In a sensible-supersensible way, it **will be felt as a kind of flame.** The center of this flame evokes the same feeling that one has when under the impression of the color lilac, and the edges as when under the impression of a bluish tone. What was formerly invisible now becomes visible, for it is created by the power of the thoughts and feelings we have stirred to life within ourselves. The plant itself will not become visible until later, so that **the physically invisible now reveals itself in a spiritually visible way.**

The following is a subject of ongoing debate in the ASP community.

It is not surprising that all this appears to many as illusion. “What is the use of such visions,” they ask, “and such hallucinations?” And many will thus fall away and abandon the path. But this is precisely the important point: not to confuse spiritual reality with imagination at this difficult stage of human evolution, and further-more, to have the courage to press onward and not become timorous and faint-hearted. On the other hand, however, the necessity must be emphasized of maintaining unimpaired and of perpetually cultivating that healthy sound sense which distinguishes truth from illusion....

Next exercise focuses on a fully developed plant:

Now let him fill his mind with the thought that the time will come when this plant will wither and die. “Nothing will be left of what I now see before me. But this plant will have developed seeds which, in their turn, will develop to new plants. I again become aware that in what I see, something lies hidden which I cannot see. I fill my mind entirely with the thought: this plant with its form and colors, will in time be no more. But **the reflection that it produces seeds teaches me that it will not disappear into nothing.** I cannot at present see with my eyes that which guards it from disappearance, any more than I previously could discern the plant in the grain of seed. Thus **there is something in the plant which my eyes cannot see.** If I let this thought live within me, and if the corresponding feeling be coupled with it, then, in due time, there will again develop in my soul a force which will ripen into a new perception.” **Out of the plant there again grows a kind of spiritual flame-form,** which is, of course, correspondingly larger than the one previously described. The flame can be felt as a being greenish-blue in the center, and yellowish-red at the outer edge.

It must be explicitly emphasized that the colors here described are not seen as the physical eyes see colors, but that through spiritual perception the same feeling is experienced as in the case of a physical color-impression....

Anyone having reached this point of spiritual vision is the richer by a great deal, for **he can perceive things not only in their present state of being but also in their process** of growth and decay. He begins to see in all things the spirit, of which physical eyes can know nothing. And therewith he has taken the first step toward the gradual solution, through personal vision, of the secret of birth and death. For the outer senses a being comes into existence through birth, and passes away through death. This, however, is only because these senses cannot perceive the concealed spirit of the being. **For the spirit, birth and death are merely a transformation,** just as the unfolding of the flower from the bud is a transformation enacted before our physical eyes. But if we desire to learn this through personal vision we must first awaken the requisite spiritual sense in the way here indicated.

In order to meet another objection, which may be raised by certain people who have some psychic experience, let it at once be admitted that there are shorter and simpler ways, and that there are persons who have acquired knowledge of the phenomena of birth and death through personal vision, without first going through all that has here been described. There are, in fact, people with considerable psychic gifts who need but a slight impulse in order to find themselves already developed. But they are the exceptions, and the methods described above are safer and apply equally to all. It is possible to acquire some knowledge of chemistry in an exceptional way, but if you wish to become a chemist you must follow the recognized and reliable course.

Ultimately, attention is turned to living feeling people. But Steiner warns:

Before making any attempt in this direction it is imperative for the student to **strive for the absolute purity of his moral character**. He must banish all thought of ever using knowledge gained in this way for his own personal benefit. He must be convinced that he would never, under any circumstances, avail himself in an evil sense of any power he may gain over his fellow-creatures. For this reason, all who seek to discover through personal vision the secrets in human nature must follow the golden rule of true spiritual science. This golden rule is as follows: **For every one step that you take in the pursuit of higher knowledge, take three steps in the perfection of your own character.**

The object of mediation is one's memory of a person filled with desire for something, yet unsure whether it will be attained.

After many attempts you will succeed in experiencing **a feeling in your soul corresponding to the state of soul of the person observed**, and you will begin to notice that through this feeling a power grows in your soul that **leads to spiritual insight into the state of soul of the other**. A picture experienced as luminous appears in your field of vision. This spiritually luminous picture is the so-called **astral embodiment of the desire** observed in that soul. Again the impression of this picture may be described as **flame-like**, yellowish-red in the center, and reddish-blue or lilac at the edges. Much depends on treating such spiritual experiences with great delicacy.... Here again is another important rule for the student: **know how to observe silence concerning your spiritual experiences**. Yes, observe silence even toward yourself. Do not attempt to clothe in words what you contemplate in the spirit, or to pore over it with clumsy intellect. Lend yourself freely and without reservation to these spiritual impressions, and do not disturb them by reflecting and pondering over them too much.... Only he who has gained some certainty and steadiness in the observation of inner experiences can speak about them, and thereby stimulate his fellow-men.

The exercise just described may be supplemented by the following: Direct your attention in the same way upon **a person** to whom the fulfillment of some wish, **the gratification of some desire, has been granted**. If the same rules and precautions be adopted as in the previous instance, spiritual insight will once more be attained. A spiritual insight will once more be attained. A **spiritual flame-form** will be distinguished, creating an impression of yellow in the center and green at the edges.

[Thus will the student] find ways and means of penetrating more and more into the secrets of human nature which are hidden from our external senses, and he will then also become ripe for a deeper insight into the mysterious connections between human nature and all else that exists in the universe. By following this path the student approaches closer and closer to the moment when he can effectively take the first steps of initiation. But before these can be taken, one thing more is necessary, though at first its need will be least of all apparent; later on, however, the student will be convinced of it.

Here follows the real kicker commentary for an “accidental” student of spiritual science. Initially, it is all about the fear, especially fear of dying, the dread of death. The main theme of a typical ASP event is terror--at least in the first stages. That is the primary obstacle against realizing freedom of non-corporeal movement, of turning a waking nightmare into an adventure quest for knowledge of a realm and existence mostly hidden behind the numbing veils of physical over-stimulation, sleep and death.

The would-be initiate must bring with him a certain measure of courage and fearlessness. He must positively go out of his way to find opportunities for developing these virtues. His training should provide for their systematic cultivation. In this respect, life itself is a good school—possibly the best school. The student must learn to look danger calmly in the face and try to overcome difficulties unswervingly. For instance, **when in the presence of some peril, he must swiftly come to the conviction that fear is of no possible use;** I must not feel afraid; I must **only think of what is to be done.** And he must improve to the extent of feeling, upon occasions which formerly inspired him with fear, that to be frightened, to be disheartened, are things that are out of the question **as far as his own inmost self is concerned.** By self-discipline in this direction, quite definite qualities are developed which are necessary for initiation into the higher mysteries. Just as man requires [nerve impulses] in his physical being in order to use his physical sense, so also he requires in his soul nature the [impulse] which is only developed in the courageous and the fearless. For **in penetrating to the higher mysteries he will see things which are concealed from ordinary humanity by the illusion of the senses.** If the physical senses do not allow us to perceive the higher truth, they are for this very reason our benefactors. Things are **thereby hidden from us** which, if realized without due preparation, would throw us into unutterable consternation, and **the sight of which would be unendurable.** The student must be fit to endure this sight. He loses certain supports in the outer world which he owes to the very illusion surrounding him. It is truly and literally as if the attention of someone were called to a danger which had threatened him for a long time, but of which he knew nothing. **Hitherto he felt no fear, but now that he knows, he is overcome by fear, though the danger has not been rendered greater by his knowing it.**

The forces at work in the world are both destructive and constructive; the destiny of manifested beings is birth and death. The seer is to behold the working of these forces and the march of destiny. **The veil enshrouding the spiritual eyes in ordinary life is to be removed.** But man is interwoven with these forces and with this destiny. **His own nature harbors destructive and constructive forces.** His own soul reveals itself to the seer as undisguised as the other objects. **He must not lose strength in the face of this self-knowledge; but strength will fail him unless he brings a surplus on which to draw.** For this purpose he must learn to maintain inner calm and steadiness in the face of difficult circumstances; he must **cultivate a**

strong trust in the beneficent powers of existence. He must be prepared to find that many motives which had actuated him hitherto will do so no longer. He will have to recognize that previously he thought and acted in a certain way only because he was still in the throes of ignorance. Reasons that influenced him formerly will now disappear. He often acted out of vanity; he will now see how utterly futile all vanity is for the seer. He often acted out of greed; he will now become aware how destructive all greed is. He will have to develop quite new motives for his thoughts and actions, and it is just for this purpose that courage and fearlessness are required.

It is pre-eminently a question of cultivating this courage and this fearlessness in the inmost depths of thought-life. The student must learn never to despair over failure. He must be equal to the thought: I shall forget that I have failed in this matter, and I shall try once more as though this had not happened. Thus he will **struggle through to the firm conviction that the fountain-head of strength from which he may draw is inexhaustible.** He struggles ever onward to the spirit which will uplift him and support him, however weak and impotent his earthly self may have proved. He must be capable of pressing on to the future undismayed by any experiences of the past. If the student has acquired these faculties up to a certain point, **he is then ripe to hear the real names of things, which are the key to higher knowledge.** For initiation consists in this very act of **learning to call the things of the world by those names which they bear in the spirit of their divine authors.** In these, their names, lies the mystery of things. It is for this reason that the initiates speak a different language from the uninitiated, for the former **know the names by which the beings themselves are called into existence.**

III: Initiation

The initiate of today undergoes experiences which would otherwise come to him [in a much later stage of development], under quite different circumstances.... Thus **the first instructions** given to the candidate for initiation serve as a substitute for these future experiences. These **are the so-called *trials***, which he has to undergo, and **which constitute a normal course of inner development....**

The would-be initiate must come into contact with certain things and facts belonging to the higher worlds, but he can only see and hear them if his feeling is ripe for the perception of the spiritual forms, colors and tones described in the chapters on *Preparation* and *Enlightenment*.

The **first trial consists in obtaining a truer vision** than the average man has of the corporeal attributes of lifeless things, and later of plants, animals and human beings. This does not mean what at present is called scientific knowledge, for it is a question not of science but of vision. As a rule, the would-be initiate proceeds to learn how the objects of nature and the beings gifted with life manifest themselves

to **the spiritual ear and the spiritual eye**. In a certain way these things then lie stripped—naked—before the beholder. The **qualities which can then be seen and heard are hidden from the physical eyes and ears**. For physical perception they are concealed as if by a veil, and the falling away of this veil for the would-be initiate consists in a process designated as the process of *Purification by Fire*. The first trial is therefore known as the *Fire-Trial*.

For many people, **ordinary life is itself a more or less unconscious process of initiation through the Fire-Trial**. Such people have passed through a wealth of experience, so that their self-confidence, courage and fortitude have been greatly strengthened in a normal manner while learning to bear sorrow, disappointment and failure in their undertakings with greatness of soul, and especially with equanimity and unbroken strength. Thus they are **often initiates without knowing it**, and it then needs but little to unseal their spiritual hearing and sight so that they become clairvoyant. For it must be noted that a genuine fire-trial is not intended to satisfy the curiosity of the candidate. It is true that he learns many uncommon things of which others can have no inkling, but this acquisition of knowledge is not the end, but the means to the end; the end consists in the attainment, thanks to this knowledge of the higher worlds, of **greater and truer self-confidence, a higher degree of courage, and a magnanimity and perseverance** such as cannot, as a rule, be acquired in the lower world.

If, after completing the fire-trial, he should wish to continue the path, a certain writing-system generally adopted in esoteric training must now be revealed to him. The actual teachings manifest themselves in this writing, because the hidden (occult) qualities of things cannot be directly expressed in the words of ordinary writing. The pupils of the initiates translate the teachings into ordinary language as best they can. The **occult script reveals itself to the soul** when the latter has attained spiritual perception, for it is **traced in the spiritual world and remains there for all time**. It cannot be learned as an artificial writing is learned and read. The candidate grows into clairvoyant knowledge in an appropriate way, and during this **growth in a new strength is developed in his soul, as a new faculty, through which he feels himself impelled to decipher the occurrences and the beings of the spiritual world like the characters of a writing**. This strength, with the experience it brings of the corresponding trial, **might possibly awaken in the soul as though of its own accord**, as the soul continually develops, but it will be found safer to follow the instructions of those who are spiritually experienced, and who have some proficiency in deciphering the occult script.

The signs of the occult script are not arbitrarily invented; they correspond to the forces actively engaged in the world. They teach us the language of things. It becomes immediately apparent to the candidate that the signs he is now learning correspond to the forms, colors, and tones which he learned to perceive during his preparation and enlightenment. He realizes that all he learned previously was only like learning to spell, and that he is only now beginning to read in the higher worlds. All the isolated figures, tones, and colors reveal themselves to him now in

one great connected whole. Now for the first time he attains complete certainty in observing the higher worlds. Hitherto he could never know positively whether the things he saw were rightly seen.

Thanks to this sign-language the student also **learns certain rules of conduct and certain duties of which he formerly knew nothing**. Having learned these he is able to perform actions endowed with a significance and a meaning such as the actions of one not initiated can never possess. He acts out of the higher worlds.... **There are people unconsciously gifted** with the ability and faculty of performing such actions, though they have never undergone an esoteric training. Such helpers of the world and of humanity pass through life bestowing blessings and performing good deeds. For reasons here not to be discussed, gifts have been bestowed on them which **appear supernatural**. What distinguishes them from the candidate for initiation is only that the latter acts consciously and with full insight into the entire situation. He acquires by training the gifts bestowed on others by higher powers **for the good of humanity**. We can sincerely revere these favored of God; but we should not for this reason regard the work of esoteric training as superfluous.

Once the student has learned the sign-language there awaits him **yet another trial, to prove whether he can move with freedom and assurance in the higher worlds**. In ordinary life he is impelled to action by exterior motives.... He works at one occupation or another because one duty or another is imposed on him by outward circumstances.... At this stage of initiation there are duties to be performed for which no outward stimulus is given. The candidate will not be moved to action by external pressure, but only through adherence to the rules of conduct revealed to him in the occult script. He must now show in this second trial that, led by such rules, he can act with the same firmness and precision with which, for instance, an official performs the duties that belong to him. For this purpose, and in the course of his further training, he will find himself faced by a certain definite task.... If he recognizes his duty and acts rightly, his trial has been successful. The success can be recognized in the alteration produced by his action in the figures, colors, and tones apprehended by his spiritual eyes and ears.... This trial is known as the **Water-Trial**, because in his activity in these higher worlds the candidate is deprived of the support derived from outward circumstances, as a swimmer is without support when swimming in water that is beyond his depth. This activity must be repeated until the candidate attains absolute poise and assurance....

Should he, in the course of his activity, introduce any of his own opinions and desires, or should he diverge for one moment from the laws which he has recognized to be right, in order to follow his own willful inclination, then the result produced would differ entirely from what was intended. He would lose sight of the goal to which his action tended, and confusion would result. Hence ample opportunity is given him in the course of this trial to **develop self-control**. This is the object in view. Here again, this trial can be more easily passed by those whose life, before initiation, has led them to acquire self-control. Anyone having acquired the faculty of following high principles and ideals, while **putting into the**

background all personal predilection; anyone capable of always performing his duty, even though inclinations and sympathies would like to seduce him from this duty—such a person is unconsciously an initiate in the midst of ordinary life. He will need but little to succeed in this particular trial. Indeed, a certain measure of initiation thus unconsciously acquired in life will, as a rule, be indispensable for success in this second trial. For even as it is difficult for those who have not learned to spell correctly in their childhood to make good this deficiency when fully grown up, so too it is difficult to develop the necessary degree of self-control at the moment of looking into the higher worlds, if this ability has not been acquired to a certain degree in ordinary life. The objects of the physical world do not alter, whatever the nature of our wishes, desires, and inclinations. **In the higher worlds, however, our wishes, desires, and inclinations are causes that produce effects.** If we wish to produce a particular effect in these worlds, we must strictly follow the right rules and **subdue every arbitrary impulse.**

One human quality is of **very special importance** at this stage of initiation, namely, an *unquestionably sound judgment*.... Further progress is now only possible if he is able to distinguish illusion, superstition, and everything fantastic, from true reality. This is, **at first, more difficult to accomplish in the higher stages** of existence than in the lower. **Every prejudice, every cherished opinion with regard to the things in question, must vanish; truth alone must guide.** There must be perfect readiness to abandon at once any idea, opinion, or inclination when logical thought demands it. Certainty in higher worlds is only likely to be attained when personal opinion is never considered.

People whose mode of thought tends to fancifulness and superstition can never make progress on the path to higher knowledge. It is indeed a precious treasure that the student is to acquire. All doubt regarding the higher worlds is removed from him. With all their laws they reveal themselves to his gaze. But he cannot acquire this treasure so long as he is the prey of fancies and illusions. It would indeed be fatal if his imagination and his prejudices ran away with his intellect. Dreamers and fantastical people are as unfit for the path to higher knowledge as superstitious people. This cannot be over-emphasized.

If the candidate is in this way sufficiently advanced, **a third trial** awaits him. He finds here no definite goal to be reached. All is left in his own hands. He finds himself in a situation where nothing impels him to act.... All that the candidate requires is the ability to come quickly to terms with himself, for he must here find his *higher self* in the truest sense of the word. **He must rapidly decide in all things to listen to the inspiration of the spirit.** There is no time for doubt or hesitation. Every moment of hesitation would prove that he was still unfit. Whatever prevents him from listening to the voice of the spirit must be courageously overcome. It is a question of showing presence of mind in this situation, and the training at this stage is concerned with the perfect development of this quality. All the accustomed inducements to act or even to think now cease. In order not to remain inactive he must not lose himself, for only within himself can he find the one central point of vantage where he can gain a firm hold. No one on reading this, without further

acquaintance with these matters, should feel an antipathy for this principle of being thrown back on oneself, for success in this trial brings with it a moment of supreme happiness.

At this stage, no less than at the others, ordinary life is itself an esoteric training for many. For anyone having reached the point of being able, **when suddenly confronted with some task or problem in life, to come to a swift decision without hesitation or delay**, for him life itself has been a training in this sense. Such situations are here meant in which success is instantly lost if action is not rapid. A person who is quick to act when a misfortune is imminent, whereas a few moments of hesitation would have seen the misfortune an accomplished fact, and who has turned this ability into a permanent personal quality, has unconsciously acquired the degree of maturity necessary for the third trial. For at this stage everything centers round the **development of absolute presence of mind**. This trial is known as **the Air-Trial**, because while undergoing it the candidate can support himself neither upon the firm basis of external incentive nor upon the figures, tones, and colors which he has learned at the stages of *preparation* and *enlightenment*, but exclusively upon [his higher self].

Upon successfully passing this trial the student is permitted to enter the *temple of higher wisdom*. All that is here said on this subject can only be the slenderest allusion. The task now to be performed is often expressed in the statement that the student must take an oath never to betray anything he has learned.... The candidate learns how to apply the higher knowledge, how to place it at the service of humanity. He then begins really and truly to understand the world. It is not so much a question of withholding the higher truths, but far more of serving them in the right way and with the necessary tact.... It is true, of course, that the higher knowledge does not lend itself to promiscuous talk; but no one having reached the stage of development described above is actually forbidden to say anything. No other person, no being exacts an oath from him with this intent. Everything is left to his own responsibility, and he learns in every situation to discover within himself what he has to do, and an oath means nothing more than that he has been found qualified to be entrusted with such a responsibility.

If the candidate is found fit for the foregoing experiences, he is then given what is called symbolically the *draught of forgetfulness*. This means that he is initiated into the secret knowledge that **enables him to act without being continually disturbed by the lower memory**. This is necessary for the initiate, for he must have full faith in the immediate present. He must be able to **destroy the veil of memory which envelops man every moment of his life**. If we judge something that happens to us today according to the experience of yesterday, we are exposed to a multitude of errors. Of course this does not mean that experience gained in life should be renounced. It should always be kept in mind as clearly as possible. But the initiate must have the **ability to judge every new experience wholly according to what it inherent in it**, and let it react upon him, unobscured by the past. We must be **prepared at every moment that every object and every being can bring**

to us some new revelation. If we judge the new by the standard of the old we are liable to error. The memory of past experiences will be of greatest use for the very reason that it enables us to perceive the new. Had we not gone through a definite experience we should perhaps be blind to the qualities of the object or being that comes before us. **Thus experience should serve the purpose of perceiving the new and not of judging it by the standard of the old.** In this respect the initiate acquires certain definite qualities, and **thereby many things are revealed to him which remain concealed from the uninitiated.**

The second draught presented to the initiate is the *draught of remembrance*. Through its agency he acquires **the faculty of retaining the knowledge of the higher truths ever present in his soul.** Ordinary memory would be unequal to this task. We must unite ourselves and become as one with the higher truths. We must not only know them, but be able, quite as a matter of course, **to manifest and administer them in living actions,** even as we ordinarily eat and drink. They must **become our practice, our habit, our inclination.** There must be no need to keep thinking about them in the ordinary sense; they must come to living expression through man himself; **they must flow through him as the functions of life through his organism.** Thus doth man ever raise himself, in a spiritual sense, to that same stature to which nature raised him in a physical sense.

IV: Some Practical Aspects

The training of thoughts and feelings, pursued in the way described in the chapters on *Preparation, Enlightenment, and Initiation*, introduces into the soul and spirit the same organic symmetry with which nature has constructed the physical body. Before this development, soul and spirit are undifferentiated masses. The clairvoyant perceives them as interlacing, rotating, cloud-like spirals, dully glimmering in reddish, reddish-brown, or reddish-yellow tones. After this training they begin to assume a brilliant yellowish-green, or greenish-blue color, and show a regular structure. This **inner regularity leading to higher knowledge, is attained when the student introduces into his thoughts and feelings the same orderly system with which nature has endowed his bodily organs** that enable him to see, hear, digest, breath, speak. Gradually **he learns to breath and see with this soul, to speak and hear with the spirit.**

In the following pages some practical aspects of the higher education of soul and spirit will be treated in greater detail. They are such that anyone can put them into practice regardless of other rules, and thereby be led some distance further into spiritual science.

A particular effort must be made to **cultivate the quality of patience.** Every symptom of **impatience produces a paralyzing, even a destructive effect on the higher faculties** that slumber in us. We must not expect an immeasurable view into the higher worlds from one day to the next, for we should assuredly be disappointed. **Contentment** with the smallest fragment attained, **repose and tranquility, must more and more take possession of the soul.** It is quite

understandable that the student should await results with impatience; but he will achieve nothing so long as he fails to master this impatience.... It is only when we ever and again surrender ourselves to a certain definite thought, making it absolutely our own, that any results can be attained. This thought is as follows: ***I must certainly do everything I can for the training and development of my soul and spirit; but I shall wait patiently until higher powers shall have found me worthy of definite enlightenment.*** If **this thought becomes so powerful** in the student **that it grows into an actual feature of his character**, he is treading the right path. This feature soon sets its mark on his exterior. The gaze of his eye becomes steady, the movement of his body becomes sure, his decisions definite, and all that goes under the name of nervousness gradually disappears. Rules that appear trifling and insignificant must be taken into account. For example, supposing someone affronts us. Before our training we should have directed our resentment against the offender; a wave of anger would have surged up within us. In a similar case, however, the thought is immediately present in the mind of the student that such an affront makes no difference to his intrinsic worth. And he does whatever must be done to meet the affront with calm and composure, and not in a spirit of anger. Of course it is not a case of simply accepting every affront, but of **acting with the same calm composure when dealing with an affront against our own person as we would if the affront were directed against another person**, in whose favor we had the right to intervene. It must always be remembered that this training is not carried out in crude outward processes, but in subtle, silent alterations in the life of thought and feeling.

Patience has the effect of attraction, impatience the effect of repulsion on the treasures of higher knowledge. In the higher regions of existence nothing can be attained by haste and unrest. Above all things, **desire and craving must be silenced**, for these are qualities of the soul before which all higher knowledge shyly withdraws. **However precious this knowledge is accounted, the student must not crave it** if he wishes to attain it. **If he wishes to have it for his own sake, he will never attain it.** This requires him to be honest with himself in his innermost soul. He must in no case be under any illusion concerning his own self. With a feeling of inner truth he must look his own faults, weaknesses, and unfitness full in the face. The moment he tries to excuse to himself any of his weaknesses, he has placed a stone in his way on the path which is to lead him upward. Such obstacles can only be removed by self-enlightenment. **There is only one way to get rid of faults and failings, and that is by a clear recognition of them. Everything slumbers in the human soul and can be awakened.** A person can even improve his intellect and reason, if he quietly and calmly makes it clear to himself why he is weak in this respect. Such self-knowledge is, of course, difficult, for the temptation to self-deception is immeasurably great. **Anyone making a habit of being truthful with himself opens the portal leading to a deeper insight.**

All curiosity must fall away from the student. He must rid himself as much as possible of the habit of **asking questions merely for the sake of gratifying a selfish thirst for knowledge.** He must only ask when knowledge can serve to

perfect his own being in the service of evolution. Nevertheless, his delight in knowledge and his devotion to it should in no way be hampered. He should listen devoutly to all that contributes to such an end, and should seek every opportunity for such devotional attention.

Special attention must be paid in esoteric training to the **education of the life of desires**. This does not mean that we are to become free of desire, for if we are to attain something we must also desire it, and desire will always tend to fulfillment if backed by a particular force. This force is derived from a right knowledge. ***Do not desire at all until you know what is right in any one sphere. That is one of the golden rules for the student.*** The wise man first ascertains the laws of the world, and then his **desires become powers which realize themselves**. The following example brings this out clearly. There are certainly many people who would like to learn from their own observation something about their life before birth. Such a desire is altogether useless and leads to no result so long as the person in question has not acquired a knowledge of the laws that govern the nature of the eternal.... We must be capable of abandoning this desire, of eliminating it altogether, and of studying, at first, with no such intention. We should cultivate a feeling of joy and devotion for what we learn, with no thought of the above end in view. We should learn to cherish and foster a particular desire in such a way that it brings with it its own fulfillment.

If we become angered, vexed or annoyed, we erect a wall around ourselves in the soul-world, **and the forces which are to develop the eyes of the soul cannot approach**. For instance, if a person angers me he sends forth a psychic current into the soul-world. I cannot see this current as long as I am myself capable of anger. My own anger conceals it from me. We must not, however, suppose that when we are free from anger we shall immediately have a psychic (astral) vision. For this purpose an organ of vision must have been developed in the soul. The beginnings of such an organ are **latent in every human being, but remain ineffective as long as he is capable of anger**. Yet this organ is not immediately present the moment anger has been combated to a small extent. We must rather persevere in this combating of anger and proceed patiently on our way; then some day we shall find that this eye of the soul has become developed. Of course, anger is not the only failing to be combated for the attainment of this end. Many grow impatient or skeptical, because they have for years combated certain qualities, and yet clairvoyance has not ensued. In that case they have just trained some qualities and allowed others to run riot. **The gift of clairvoyance only manifests itself when all those qualities which stunt the growth of the latent faculties are suppressed**. Undoubtedly, the beginnings of such seeing and hearing may appear at an earlier period, but these are only young and tender shoots which are subjected to all possible error, and which, if not carefully tended and guarded, may quickly die.

Other qualities which, like anger and vexation, have to be combated, are **timidity, superstition, prejudice, vanity and ambition, curiosity, the mania for imparting information, and the making of distinctions** in human beings

according to the outward characteristics of rank, sex, race, and so forth. In our time it is difficult for people to understand how the combating of such qualities can have anything to do with the heightening of the faculty of cognition. But every spiritual scientist knows that **much more depends upon such matters than upon the increase of intelligence and employment of artificial exercises**. Especially can misunderstanding arise if we believe that we must become foolhardy in order to be fearless; that we must close our eyes to the differences between people, because we must combat the prejudices of rank, race, and so forth. Rather is it true that a **correct estimate of all things is to be attained only when we are no longer entangled in prejudice**. Even in the ordinary sense it is true that the **fear of some phenomenon prevents us from estimating it rightly**; that a racial prejudice prevents us from seeing into a man's soul. It is this ordinary sense that the student must develop in all its delicacy and subtlety.

Every word spoken without having been thoroughly purged in thought is a stone thrown in the way of esoteric training. And here something must be considered which can only be explained by giving an example. If anything be said to which we must reply, we must **be careful to consider the speaker's opinion, feeling, and even his prejudice, rather than what we ourselves have to say** at the moment on the subject under discussion. In this example **a refined quality of tact is indicated**, to the cultivation of which the student must devote his care. He must learn to judge what importance it may have for the other person if he opposes the latter's opinion with his own. This does not mean that he must withhold his opinion. There can be no question of that. But he must **listen to the speaker as carefully and as attentively as he possibly can and let his reply derive its form from what he has just heard**. In such cases one particular thought recurs ever and again to the student, and he is treading the right path if this thought lives with him to the extent of becoming a trait of his character. This thought is as follows: *The importance lies not in the difference of our opinions but in his discovering through his own effort what is right if I contribute something toward it*. Thoughts of this and of a similar nature cause the character and the behavior of the student to be permeated with a **quality of gentleness**, which is one of the chief means used in all esoteric training. **Harshness scares away the soul-pictures that should open the eye of the soul; gentleness clears the obstacles away and unseals the inner organs**.

Along with gentleness, another quality will presently be developed in the soul of the student: that of **quietly paying attention to all the subtleties in the soul-life of his environment**, while reducing to absolute silence any activity within his own soul. The soul-life of his environment will impress itself on him in such a way that his own soul will grow, and as it grows, become regular in its structure, as a plant expanding in the sunlight. **Gentleness and patient reserve open the soul to the soul-world and the spirit to the spirit-world**. Persevere in silent inner seclusion; close the senses to all that they brought you before your training; reduce to absolute immobility all the thoughts which, according to your previous habits, surged within you; **become quite still and silent within, wait in patience, and then the higher worlds will begin to fashion and perfect the organs of sights and hearing in**

your soul and spirit. Do not expect immediately to see and hear in the world of soul and spirit, for all that you are doing does but contribute to the development of your higher senses, and you will only be able to hear with soul and spirit when you possess these higher senses. Having persevered for a time in silent inner seclusion, **go about your customary daily affairs**, imprinting deeply upon your mind this thought: *“Some day, when I have grown sufficiently, I shall attain that which I am destined to attain,”* and **make no attempt to attract forcefully any of these higher powers to yourself.** Every student receives these instructions at the outset. By observing them he perfects himself. If he neglects them, all his labor is in vain. But they are only difficult of achievement for the impatient and the unpersevering. **No other obstacles exist save those which we ourselves place in our own path, and which can be avoided by all who really will.** This point must be continually emphasized, because many people form an altogether wrong conception of the difficulties that beset the path to higher knowledge....

There are other ways which lead more quickly to the goal, but what is here explained has nothing to do with them, because they have certain effects which no experienced spiritual scientist considers desirable. Since fragmentary information concerning these ways is continually finding its way into publicity, express warning must be given against entering upon them. For reasons which only the initiated can understand, these ways can never be made public in their true form. The fragments appearing here and there can never lead to profitable results, but may easily undermine health, happiness, and peace of mind. **It would be far better for people to avoid having anything to do with such things than to risk entrusting themselves to wholly dark forces, of whose nature and origin they can know nothing.**

Something may here be said concerning the environment in which this training should be undertaken ... yet the case differs for almost every person. Anyone practicing in an environment filled only with self-seeking interests ... must be conscious of the fact that these interests are not without their effect on the development of his spiritual organs. It is true that the inner laws of these organs are so powerful that this influence cannot be fatally injurious. Just as a lily can never grow into a thistle, however inappropriate its environment, so, too, **the eye of the soul can never grow to anything but its destined shape even though it be subjected to the self-seeking interests of modern cities. But under all circumstances it is well if the student seeks, now and again, his environment in the restful peace, the inner dignity and sweetness of nature.** Especially fortunate is the student who can carry out his esoteric training surrounded by the green world of plants, or among the sunny hills, where nature weaves her web of sweet simplicity. This environment develops the inner organs in a harmony which can never ensue in a modern city. More favorably situated than the townsman is the person who, **during his childhood at least**, had been able to breathe the fragrance of pines, to gaze on snowy peaks, and observe the silent activity of woodland creatures and insects. Yet no city-dweller should fail to **give to the organs of his soul and spirit, as they develop, the nurture that comes from the inspired**

teachings of spiritual research. If our eyes cannot follow the woods in their mantel of green every spring, day by day, we should instead open our soul to **the glorious teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, or of St. John's Gospel, or of St. Thomas à Kempis**, and to the descriptions resulting from spiritual science. There are many ways to the summit of insight, but much depends on the right choice. The spiritually experienced could say much concerning these paths, much that might seem strange to the uninitiated. Someone, for instance, might be very far advanced on the path; he might be standing, so to speak, at the very entrance of sight and hearing with soul and spirit; he is then fortunate enough to make a journey over the calm or maybe tempestuous ocean, and **a veil falls away from the eyes of his soul; suddenly he becomes a seer.** Another is also so far advanced that this veil only needs to be loosened; this occurs through some stroke of destiny. On another this stroke might well have had the effect of paralyzing his powers and undermining his energy; for the esoteric student it becomes the occasion of his *enlightenment*. A third perseveres patiently for years without any marked result. **Suddenly, while silently seated in his quiet chamber, spiritual light envelops him; the walls disappear, become transparent for his soul, and a new world expands before his eyes that have become seeing, or resounds in his ears that have become spiritually hearing.**

V: The Conditions of Esoteric Training

*This chapter backtracks and embraces all the forgoing stages of preparation and enlightenment to describe most inspiringly the habits and attitudes that must characterize the student's **total lifestyle**. A quick reading of the New Testament reveals common themes, especially the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus and the shorter epistles of Paul, James and John.*

The **conditions attached to esoteric training are not arbitrary.** They are the natural outcome of esoteric knowledge.... No one can receive esoteric training who is unwilling to meet the demands considered necessary.... To insist on being admitted to esoteric training without fulfilling the conditions would be equivalent to saying: "Teach me how to paint, but do not ask me to handle a paint-brush." It is true, **the conditions are strict, yet they are not harsh**, since their fulfillment not only should be, but indeed **must be a voluntary action**.... To ask of the teacher: "Give me your higher knowledge, but leave me my customary emotions, feelings, and thoughts," would be an impossible demand. In this case the gratification of curiosity and desire for knowledge would be the only motive. When pursued in such a spirit, however, higher knowledge can never be attained.

Let us now consider in turn the conditions imposed on the student. It should be emphasized that [it is not the complete fulfillment of conditions required], but only the corresponding effort. No one can wholly fulfill them, but **everyone can start on**

the path toward them. **It is the effort of will that matters**, and the ready disposition to enter upon this path.

1. The **first condition is that the student should pay heed to the advancement of bodily and spiritual health....** The unhealthy are not rejected, but it is demanded of the student that he should have the will to lead a healthy life. In this respect he must attain the greatest possible independence.... Duty must in many cases stand higher than health, often, even, than life itself; but pleasure must never stand higher, as far as the student is concerned. For him pleasure can only be a means to health and to life, and in this connection we must, above all, be honest and truthful with ourselves.... Some may derive satisfaction from asceticism just as others can from wine-bibbing, but they must not imagine that this sort of asceticism will assist them in attaining higher knowledge.... Of special importance for the student is the striving for complete health of mind. An unhealthy life of thought and feeling will not fail to obstruct the path to higher knowledge. Clear, calm thinking, with stability of feeling and emotion, form here the basis of all work. Nothing should be further removed from the student than an inclination toward a fantastical, excitable life, toward nervousness, exaggeration, and fanaticism.... All one-sided and extravagant tendencies in his sentiments and criticisms should be avoided. Failing this, he would find his way merely into worlds of his own imagination, instead of higher worlds; in place of truth, his own pet opinions would assert themselves. It is better for the student to be matter-of-fact, than excitable and fantastic.

2. The **second condition is that the student should feel himself co-ordinated as a link in the whole of life....** Instead of directing my feelings against [one who fails to meet my expectations], I shall rather reflect on my own attitude, so that the pupil may in the future be better able to satisfy my demands. Proceeding from such an attitude, a change will come over the student's whole way of thinking. This holds good in all things, great or small. Such an attitude of mind, for instance, alters the way I regard a criminal. I suspend my judgment and say to myself: "I am, like him, only a human being. Through favorable circumstances I received an education which perhaps alone saved me from a similar fate." I may then also come to the conclusion that this human brother of mine would have become a different man had my teachers taken the same pains with him they took with me. I shall reflect on the fact that something was given to me which was withheld from him, that I enjoy my fortune precisely because it was denied him. And then I shall naturally come to think of myself as a link in the whole of humanity and a sharer in the responsibility for everything that occurs....

3. This brings us to the **third condition. The student must work his way upward to the realization that his thoughts and feelings are as important for the world as his actions.** It must be realized that it is equally injurious to hate a fellow-being as to strike him. The realization will then follow that by perfecting ourselves we accomplish something not only for ourselves, but for the whole world.... We are only filled with the right faith in the significance of our inner self, of our soul, when

we work at it is though it were at least as real as all external things. We must admit that our every feeling produces an effect, just as does every action of our hand.

4. These words already express the **fourth condition: to acquire the conviction that the real being of man does not lie in his exterior but in his interior**. Anyone regarding himself as a product of the outer world, as a result of the physical world, cannot succeed in this esoteric training, for the feeling that we are beings of soul and spirit forms its very basis. The acquisition of this feeling renders the student fit to distinguish between inner duty and outward success. He learns that the one cannot be directly measured by the other.... The voice of his own soul struggling honestly toward knowledge must bring him the one and only recognition of the truths for which he stands. But he must learn as much as he possibly can from his environment so as to discover what those around him need, and what is good for them. In this way he will develop within himself what is known in spiritual science as the “spiritual balance.” An open heart for the needs of the outer world lies on one of the scales, and inner fortitude and unfaltering endurance on the other.

5. This brings us to the **fifth condition: steadfastness in carrying out a resolution**. Nothing should induce the student to deviate from a resolution he may have taken, save only the perception that he was in error. Every resolution is a force [that continues to work] on in its own way.... But all actions arising from desire are worthless in relation to the higher worlds, [where devotion to the action itself is the only factor insuring its success]. In this [devotion], every impulse that impels the student to action should fulfill itself. Undismayed by failure, he will never grow weary of endeavoring repeatedly [and sacrificially] to translate some resolution into action....

6. A **sixth condition is the development of a feeling of thankfulness** for everything with which man is favored. We must realize that our existence is a gift from the entire universe.... Thoughts such as these must come naturally to all who seek esoteric training, for if the latter do not feel inclined to entertain them, they will be incapable of developing within themselves that all-embracing love which is necessary for the attainment of higher knowledge. Nothing can reveal itself to us which we do not love. And every revelation must fill us with thankfulness, for we ourselves are the richer for it.

7. All these conditions must be united in a **seventh: to regard life unceasingly in the manner demanded by these conditions**. [The student's every mode] of expression will ...be brought into harmony, and no longer [be contradictory]. And thus he will prepare himself for the inner tranquillity he must attain during the preliminary steps of his training.

Anyone sincerely showing the good will to fulfill these conditions may decide to seek esoteric training. He will then be ready to follow the advice given above.... **Everything interior must manifest itself in an exterior way**, and just as a picture is not evident when it exists only in the mind of the painter, so, too, there can be no

esoteric training without outward expression.... **Just as form without spirit is null and void, so also would spirit remain inactive if it did not create for itself a form....** Through failure to fulfill the condition here given, the student will lack the perfect love for everything that fashions and creates, and the inclination to refrain from all destruction as such. **He must so train himself that not only in his actions but also in his words, feelings, and thoughts he will never destroy anything for the sake of destruction. His joy must be in growth and life, and he must only lend his hand to destruction, when he is also able, through and by means of destruction, to promote new life.** This does not mean that the student must simply look on while evil runs riot, but rather that **he must seek even in evil that side through which he may transform it into good.** He will then see more and more clearly that evil and imperfection may best be combated by the creation of the good and the perfect. The student knows that out of nothing, nothing can be created, but also that the imperfect can be transformed into the perfect. **Anyone developing within himself the disposition to create, will soon find himself capable of facing evil in the right way.**

It must be clearly realized that the purpose of this training is to build and not to destroy. The student should therefore bring with him the good will for sincere and devoted work, and not the intention to criticize and destroy. He should be capable of devotion, for he must learn what he does not yet know; he should look reverently on that which discloses itself. Work and devotion, these are the fundamental qualities which must be demanded of the student.... **Work done for the sake of success will be the least successful,** and learning pursued without devotion will be the least conducive to progress. **Only the love of work, and not of success, leads to progress.** And if in learning the student seeks straight thinking and sound judgment, he need not stunt his devotion by doubts and suspicions.

...We should always bear in mind that we do not need to learn what we are already able to judge. Therefore if our sole intention is to judge, we can learn nothing more. Esoteric training, however, centers in learning; we must have absolutely the good will to be learners. If we cannot understand something, it is far better not to judge than to judge adversely. We can wait until later for a true understanding. The higher we climb the ladder of knowledge, the more do we require the faculty of listening with quiet devotion. All **perception of truth**, all life and activity in the world of the spirit, become **subtle and delicate in comparison with the processes of the ordinary intellect and of life in the physical world....** It is for this reason that men arrive at such different opinions and points of view regarding the higher regions.... Opinions differing from the one true opinion can only be arrived at when people, insufficiently prepared, judge in accordance with their pet theories, their habitual ways of thought, and so forth. **Just as there is only one correct opinion concerning a mathematical problem, so also is this true with regard to the higher worlds.** But before such an opinion can be reached, due preparation must first be undergone. If this were only considered, the conditions attached to esoteric training would be surprising to none. It is indeed true that truth and the higher life abide in every soul, and that each can and must find them for himself. But they lie

deeply buried, and can only be brought up from their deep shafts after all obstacles have been cleared away. Only the experienced can advise how this may be done. Such advice is found in spiritual science. **No truth is forced on anyone; no dogma is proclaimed; a way only is pointed out.** It is true that everyone could find this way unaided, but only perhaps after many [lifetimes]. **By esoteric training this way is shortened. We thus reach more quickly a point from which we can cooperate in those worlds where the salvation and evolution of man are furthered by spiritual work.**

This brings to an end the indications to be given in connection with the attainment of knowledge of higher worlds.

***Theosophy: An Introduction to the Supersensible Knowledge
of the World and Destination of Man***
by Rudolf Steiner

Italicized notes and comments by Stephen D Evans
also emboldened selections [and bracketed alternate phrasings]

http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA009/English/GA009_index.html

I encourage my reader to attempt first reading an original English translation of Steiner's writing, such as the 1970 edition by Henry Monges linked above –at least the first chapter. Steiner recognized that the majority of his audience would be approaching these questions from a theosophical worldview. Such was the tenor of the time and place. The initial audience of Jesus and John was Hellenic post-Persian Jew, therefore Biblical language and discussions approach similar concerns from that perspective. Steiner likewise became one of his audience and spoke their language even better than they, so as to inspire amateur theosophists to yet higher, truer aspiration. His original German publication was released to European readers around 1920, at a time when the term “theosophy” carried little of the negative implication associated since then, especially as societies bearing that brand have gone the way of New Age mystics. Steiner himself observed the beginnings of this trend –their attention to advents of Far Eastern messianic wannabes instead of the One revealed historical Christ and pivotal Golgotha event. And so he separated himself and his study to found a new discipline, which he termed “anthroposophy”. The core meaning of that choice is evident in the expanded title of this work. Clearly, Steiner considered that mankind and individuals are destined to realize a far greater potential for knowledge than modern science can afford, at least while limiting itself to what may be revealed and defined by means of the five physical senses. By “supersensible”, one must not assume he means the same as “extra-sensory” as in mediumistic claims of ESP. He explains that our physical senses are truly reflective extensions, in fact grosser outgrowths of more fundamental spiritual senses, themselves belonging to Man's primary spiritual body and their revelations subject to the laws of spirit.

And so, the reader must begin there. Just as modern science starts with a basic denial, that anything beyond or behind physical appearances is

neither existent nor knowable; so the student of “higher” knowledge will start with the opposite affirmation. We were made and intended to overcome our physical limitations and extend consciousness beyond the screen or veil of material representations. As I stated in my own introduction to Anthroposophy, man’s cosmic being is both the primary subject and method of investigation.

Again, I present this abridged version of the referenced English translation for comment, especially as it relates to my own “accidental” baptism into the science of spirit via ASP, Awareness during Sleep Paralysis. (It was not originally intended for general publication; rather I had deliberately posted copy online only for my own reference, for friends and family, where it was unlikely to be found and indexed by public search engines.) The reader may also skim my highlighting of the text for a condensed reading.

Having reviewed already Steiner’s other fundamental works – Knowledge; Esoteric Science; Christianity—my plan was to focus next upon this introductory work. My course was interrupted, however. Personal experiences of spiritual and physical import started me on a sojourn down different paths of study, connecting and distinguishing ASP and Steiner’s spiritual science from worldviews presented by Yoga, Buddhist, Taoist and New Age schools of soul development. I had never intended to go that way—even ASP had not turned me there. After a whole summer season, I return to this study more determined than ever to tread the One Way appropriate to this age of redemption in Christ. Now I have a renewed perspective respecting the experience and calling of Steiner to these generations. I read this book again in a new light. Expect hereafter to encounter comments contrasting anthroposophy to kundalini yoga -- one being the modern expression of Archangel Michael, the Face of God and rightful Spirit of this age. That other, deceptively attractive, remains yet another emergence of the ancient unholy alliance between Lucifer and Ahriman, archenemies of God and Man, known as Baal, Antichrist, Babylon and her faithless steed, the Beast that might have been Man.

Prefaces

From the Prefaces to the First, Second, and Third Editions

The purpose of this book is to give a description of some of the regions of the supersensible world. The reader who is only willing to admit the existence of the sensible world will look upon this description as merely an unreal production of the imagination. Whoever looks for paths that lead beyond this world of the senses, however, will soon learn to understand that human life only gains in worth and significance through insight into another world. He will not, as many fear, be estranged from the “real” world through this new power of vision because only through it does he learn to stand securely and firmly in this life and learns to know the causes of life. Without this power of vision he gropes like a blind man through their effects. **Only through the understanding of the supersensible does the sensible “real” acquire meaning. A man therefore becomes more and not less fit for life through this understanding. Only he who understands life can become a truly practical man.**

The author of this book describes nothing to which he cannot bear witness from experience — the kind of experience that belongs to these regions. Nothing will be described here that has not been personally experienced in this sense.

This book cannot be read in the customary manner of the present day. In certain respects every page, and even many sentences, will have to be worked out by the reader. This has been aimed at intentionally because **only in this way can the book become to the reader what it ought to be.** The one who merely reads it through will not have read it at all. **Its truths must be experienced, lived. Only in this sense has spiritual science any value.**

The book cannot be judged from the standpoint of science if the point of view adopted in forming such a judgment is not gained from the book itself. If the critic will adopt this point of view, he will certainly see that the presentation of the facts given in this book will in no way conflict with truly scientific methods. The author is satisfied that he has taken care not to come into conflict with his own scientific scrupulousness even by a single word.

Those who feel more drawn to another method of searching after the truths here set forth will find such a method in my *Philosophy of Freedom*. The lines of thought taken in these two books, though different, lead to the same goal. For the understanding of the one, the other is by no means necessary, although undoubtedly helpful to some persons.

Those who look for “ultimate” truths in this book will perhaps lay it aside unsatisfied. The primary intention of the author has been to present the fundamental truths underlying the whole domain of spiritual science. **It lies in the very nature of man to ask at once about the beginning and the end of the world, the**

purpose of existence, and the nature and being of God. Anyone, however, who looks not for mere phrases and concepts of the intellect, but for a real understanding of life, knows that in a work that deals with the elements of spiritual knowledge, things may not be said that belong to the higher stages of wisdom. It is indeed only through an understanding of these elements that it becomes clear how higher questions should be asked. In another work forming a continuation of this one, namely in the author's *Occult Science, an Outline*, further particulars will be found on the subject here dealt with.

In the preface to a second edition of this book the following supplementary remarks were inserted: Anyone who at the present time gives a description of supersensible facts ought to be quite clear on two points. The first is that the cultivation of supersensible knowledge is a necessity for our age; the other is that the intellectual and spiritual life of the day is full of ideas and feelings that make a description like this appear to many as an absolute chaos of fantastic notions and dreams.

Knowledge of the supersensible is a necessity today because **all that a man can learn through current methods about the world and life arouses in him numerous questions. Those can be answered only by means of supersensible truths.** We ought not to deceive ourselves with regard to the fact that the teaching concerning the fundamental truths of existence given within the intellectual and spiritual currents of today is for the deeply feeling soul a source, not of answer, but of questions about the great problems of the universe and of life. Some people may for a time hold firmly to the opinion that they can find a solution of the problems of existence within conclusions from strictly scientific facts, and within the deductions of this or that thinker of the day. But when the soul descends into those depths into which it must descend if it is to understand itself, what at first seemed to be an answer appears only as the incentive to the real question. An answer to this question does not merely have to satisfy human curiosity. On it depend the inner calm and completeness of the soul life. The attainment of such an answer does not satisfy merely the thirst for knowledge. It makes a man capable of practical work and fits him for the duties of life, while **the lack of an answer to these questions lames his soul and finally his body also.** In fact, the knowledge of the supersensible is not merely something that meets a theoretical requirement. It supplies a method for leading a truly practical life. **It is just because of the nature of our present day intellectual life that study in the domain of spiritual knowledge is indispensable.**

On the other hand **it is an evident fact that many today reject most strongly what they most sorely need.** Some people are so greatly influenced by theories built up on the basis of exact scientific experience that they cannot do otherwise than regard the contents of a book like this as a boundless absurdity. The exponent of supersensible truths is able to view such a fact entirely free from any illusions. People will certainly be prone to demand that he give irrefutable proofs for what he states, but they do not realize that in so doing they are the victims of a misconception. They demand, although unconsciously, not the proofs lying within the things themselves, but those that they personally are willing to recognize or are

in a condition to recognize. The author of this book is sure that any person, taking his stand on the basis of the science of the present day, will find that it contains nothing that he will be unable to accept. He knows that all the requirements of modern science can be complied with, and for this very reason the method adopted here of presenting the facts of the supersensible world supplies its own justification. In fact, **the way in which true modern science approaches and deals with a subject is precisely the one that is in full harmony with this presentation.** Anyone who thinks thus will feel moved by many a discussion in a way described by Goethe's deeply true saying, "A false teaching does not offer any opening to refutation because it rests upon the conviction that the false is true." Argument is fruitless with those who allow only such proofs to weigh with them as fit in with their own way of thinking. Those who know the true nature of what is called "proving" a matter see clearly that the human soul finds truth through other means than by argument. It is with these thoughts in mind that the author offers this book for publication.

Preface to the Revised English Edition

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Descriptions of the supersensible must be treated differently from descriptions of the sensible world. They appeal to the reader in a different way. They demand more from him and he must work with the author more intensely in thought while reading. The author needs his co-operation to a far higher degree than does one who writes descriptions drawn from the regions of the sensory world. Many critics will perhaps complain because I have made special efforts to comply with this demand in my description of the spiritual world. The spiritual world, however, **has not the definite outlines of the physical, and if anyone were to represent it so . . . he would be describing something untrue.** In describing the spiritual world of facts, the style must be in accordance with the mobile, flowing character of that world.

Inner truth for descriptions of the spiritual world belongs alone to what is expressed in flowing, mobile ideas. The peculiar character of the spiritual world must be carried over into the ideas. If the reader applied the standard to which he is accustomed from descriptions of the sensory world, he will find it difficult to adapt himself to this different method of description.

It is by *inner* exertion of the soul that the human being is able to reach the supersensible world. That world would, indeed, have no value if it lay spread out wholly before this consciousness. It would then be in no way different from the sensuous world. **Before it can be known, the longing must be present to find what lies more deeply hidden** in existence than do the forces of the world perceived by the senses. **This longing is one of the inner experiences that prepare the way for a knowledge of the supersensible world.** Even as there can be no blossom without first the root, so supersensible knowledge has no true life without this longing.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the ideas of the supersensible world arise as an illusion of this longing. The lungs do not create the air for which they long, neither does the human soul create out of its longing the ideas of the supersensible world. The soul has this longing because it is formed and built for the supersensible world, just as the lungs are constructed for air.

There may be those who say that this supersensible world can only have significance for such as already have the power to perceive it, but this is not so. There is no need to be a painter in order to feel the beauty of a painting, yet only a painter can paint it. In the same sense **it is unnecessary to be a researcher in the supersensible in order to judge the truth of the results of supersensible research. It is only necessary to be a researcher in order to discover them.** This is right in principle. In the last chapter of this book, however — and in detail in others of my books — the methods are given whereby **it is possible for anyone to become a researcher in the supersensible world, and thus be in a position to test the results of such research.**

Rudolf Steiner
April, 1922

Introduction

Steiner begins with the perfect illustration. Material scientists, for all their devotion to fact and reason, will appear simply blind to those who truly “see” behind the veil of physical appearances. To the Newtonian physicist, seeing with physical eyes is the proof of physical fact. Why should it be less so regarding metaphysical fact as apprehended by spiritual sight? That immaterial phenomena would require agency of corresponding senses should be expected as entirely reasonable. No more should the unsighted expect those able to “see” colors to prove the rainbow’s reality using ears instead.

[In] the autumn of **1813, Johann Gottlieb Fichte** gave to the world --as the ripe fruit of a life wholly devoted to the service of truth-- **his Introduction to the Science of Knowledge**. [He said therein] at the very outset, “This doctrine presupposes an entirely new inner sense organ or instrument through which a new world is revealed having no existence for the ordinary man.” He then **showed by a simile how incomprehensible this doctrine must be when judged by conception of the ordinary senses**. “Think of a world of **people born blind** who, therefore, know only those objects and relations that exist through the sense of touch. **Go among them, and speak to them of colors** and the other relations that exist only through light and for the sense of sight. You will convey nothing to their minds, and this will be the more fortunate if they tell you so, for you will then quickly notice your mistake and, **if unable to open their eyes, you will cease talking in vain**”

Now those who speak about such things as Fichte does in this instance, often find themselves in the position of a normal man among those born blind. Yet these are things that relate to a man's true being and highest goal, and to believe it necessary "to cease talking in vain" would be to despair of humanity. **We ought not to doubt for one moment the possibility of opening the eyes of every earnest person to these things.** [This is why] those have written and spoken who have felt within themselves that the inner sense-instrument had developed, thereby enabling them to know the true nature and being of man, which is generally hidden from the outer senses. Hence from the most ancient times such a hidden wisdom has been spoken of again and again. **Those who have grasped some understanding of it feel just as sure of their possession as people with normal eyes feel sure of their ability to visualize color. For them this hidden wisdom requires no proof.** They know also that this hidden wisdom requires no proof for anyone else to whom the "higher sense" has unfolded itself. They can speak to such a person as a traveler can speak about America to people who have themselves never seen that country but who can visualize it, for they would see all that he has seen were the opportunity to present itself to them.

This is precisely how biblical prophets described the dilemma of fallen man: "...having eyes but not seeing, having ears yet not hearing ... otherwise they would see and hear and thus gain true understanding." So the means to that very gift promised by the Enemy from the beginning, understanding-- Man was urged to rob himself of it by attempting to "take" prematurely what God was certain to give in the fullness of time. I imagine that the fruit of the other tree must not have appeared so tasty. The Tree of Life was never forbidden, at least not until that moment when man chose bondage to a rival god. Perhaps freedom, like life, is an acquired taste after all.

It is not, however, only to researchers into the spiritual world that **the observer of the supersensible** has to speak. He **must address his words to all men, because he has to give an account** of things that concern all men. Indeed, he knows that **without a knowledge of these things no one can, in the true sense of the word, be a human being.** Thus, he speaks to all men because he knows **there are different degrees of understanding** for what he has to say. The feeling for truth and the power of understanding it are inherent in everyone, and he knows that even those who are still far from the moment in which they will acquire the ability to make their own spiritual research can bring a measure of understanding to meet him. He addresses himself first to this **understanding that can flash forth in every healthy soul.** He knows that in this understanding there is **a force that must slowly lead to the higher degrees** of knowledge. This feeling, which perhaps at first perceives nothing at all of what it is told, **is itself the magician that opens the "eye of the spirit."** In darkness this feeling stirs. **The soul sees nothing, but through this feeling it is seized by the power of truth. The truth then gradually draws nearer to the soul and opens the higher sense in it.** In one person it may

take a longer, in another a shorter time. Everyone, however, who has **patience and endurance reaches this goal**, for although not every physical eye can be operated on, every spiritual eye can be opened. When it will be opened is only a question of time.

Erudition and scientific training are not prerequisite conditions for the unfolding of this higher sense. **It can develop in the unsophisticated person just as in the renowned scientist.** Indeed, what is often called at the present time the only true science can, for the attainment of this goal, be frequently a hindrance rather than a help because this **science considers real only what is accessible to the ordinary senses.** Its merits in regard to the knowledge of that reality may be ever so great, yet when science declares that what is necessary and a blessing for itself shall also be authoritative for all human knowledge, it **thereby creates a mass of prejudices that close the approach to higher realities.**

The objection is often made to what has just been said that insurmountable limits have been once and forever set to man's knowledge, and since a man cannot overstep these limits, all knowledge must be rejected that does not take them into account. Furthermore, the one who presumes to make assertions about things, which for many stand proved as lying beyond the limits of man's capacity for knowledge, is looked upon as being highly immodest. In making such objections **the fact is entirely disregarded that a development of the human powers of knowledge must precede the higher knowledge.** What lies beyond the limits of knowledge before such a development takes place is, after **the awakening of faculties slumbering in every man, entirely within the realm of knowledge.**

One point in this connection must not be neglected. It might be said, "Of what use is it to speak to people about things for which their powers of knowledge are not yet awakened and are therefore still closed to them?" This is really the wrong way to view the matter. **Certain powers are required to discover the things referred to, but** if after having been discovered they are made known, every person can understand them who is willing to bring to them unprejudiced logic and a healthy sense of truth. [The things made known in this book] are wholly of a kind [to make the reader feel] **the riddles of human life and the phenomena of the world can be satisfactorily approached.** This impression will be produced upon **everyone who permits thought unclouded by prejudice, [also] a feeling for truth, free and without reservation,** to work within him. Put yourself for a moment in the position of asking, "If the things asserted here are true, do they afford a satisfying explanation of life?" You will find that the life of every man supplied a confirmation.

In order to be a teacher in these higher regions of existence it is by no means sufficient to have simply developed the sense for them. To that end science is just as necessary as it is for the teacher's calling in the world of ordinary reality. **Higher seeing alone does not make a knower in the spiritual any more than healthy sense organs make a scholar in the realm of sensible realities.** Because in truth

all reality, the lower as well as the higher spiritual, are only two sides of one and the same fundamental being, anyone who is ignorant in the lower branches of knowledge will as a rule remain ignorant in the higher. **This fact creates a feeling of immeasurable responsibility in the person who, through a spiritual call, feels himself summoned to speak** about the spiritual regions of existence. It **imposes upon him humility and reserve**. This should deter no one — not even those whose other circumstances of life afford them no opportunity for the study of ordinary science — from occupying himself with the higher truths. Everyone can fulfill his task as a man without understanding anything of botany, zoology, mathematics and the other sciences. He cannot, however, in the full sense of the word, be a human being without having come in some way or other nearer to an understanding of the nature and destination of man as revealed through the knowledge of the supersensible.

The highest to which a man is able to look, he calls the Divine, and he somehow must think of the highest destiny as being in connection with this Divinity. **The wisdom, therefore, that reaches out beyond the sensible and reveals to him his own being and with it his final goal, may well be called divine wisdom or theosophy**. To the study of **the spiritual process in human life and in the cosmos**, the term *spiritual science* may be given. When, as in this book, one extracts from this spiritual science those special results that have **reference to the spiritual core of man's being then the expression theosophy** may be employed to designate this domain because it has been employed for centuries in this way.

From this point of view there will be **sketched in this book an outline of the theosophical conception of the universe**. The writer of it will bring forward nothing that is not a fact for him in the same sense that an experience of the outer world is a fact for eyes and ears and the ordinary intelligence. The concern here is with **experiences that become accessible to everyone who is determined to tread the path of knowledge** described in a later chapter of this book. We take the right attitude towards the things of the supersensible world **when we assume that sound thinking and feeling are capable of understanding** everything of true knowledge that emerges from the higher worlds. Further, when we start from this understanding and therewith lay down a firm foundation, **we have also made a great step forward towards, “seeing” for ourselves**, even though in order to attain this, other things must be added also. We lock and bolt the door to the true higher knowledge, however, when we despise this road and are determined to penetrate the higher worlds only in some other way. [The decision] to recognize higher worlds only when we have seen them is a hindrance in the way of this very seeing itself. The determination to understand first through sound thinking what later can be seen, furthers that seeing. It conjures forth important powers of the soul that lead to this seeing of the seer.

Chapter I: The Essential Nature of Man

Herein is found likely Steiner's most concise and readable exposition of anthropology, the development and design of human nature as viewed from the stars by angels, so to speak --a cosmic perspective. Proposed spiritual scientific inquiry makes little sense without a grasp of these fundamentals, just as physical Newtonian science must first define the limits of observation via the physical senses of materially evident phenomena.

The following **words of Goethe** point beautifully to the beginning **of one way by which the essential nature of man can be known**. “As soon as a person becomes aware of the objects around him, he considers them in relation to himself, and rightly so, because his whole fate depends on whether they please or displease him, attract or repel, help or harm him. This quite natural way of looking at or judging things appears to be as easy as it is necessary. A person is, nevertheless, exposed through it to a thousand errors that often make him ashamed and embitter his life.

“A far more difficult task is undertaken by those whose keen desire for knowledge urges them to strive to observe the objects of nature as such and in their relationship to each other. These individuals soon feel the lack of the test that helped them when they, as men, regarded the objects in reference to themselves personally. They lack the test of pleasure and displeasure, attraction and repulsion, usefulness and harmfulness. Yet this test must be renounced entirely. They ought as dispassionate and, so to speak, divine beings, to seek and examine what is, not what gratifies. Thus the true botanist should not be moved either by the beauty or by the usefulness of the plants. He must study their formation and their relation to the rest of the plant kingdom. They are one and all enticed forth and shone upon by the sun without distinction, and so he should, equably and quietly, look at and survey them all and obtain the test for this knowledge, the data for his deductions, not out of himself, but from within the circle of the things he observes.”

This thought thus expressed by Goethe directs man's attention to **three divisions of things**. First, the objects concerning which information continually flows to him through the doors of his senses — the **objects he touches, smells, tastes, hears and sees**. Second, the **impressions that these make on him**, characterizing themselves through the fact that he finds the **one sympathetic, the other abhorrent**, the one useful, another harmful. Third, the knowledge that he, as a “so to speak divine being,” acquires concerning the objects, that is, **the secrets of their activities and their being as they unveil themselves** to him.

These three divisions are distinctly separate in human life, and **man thereby becomes aware that he is interwoven with the world in a threefold way**. The first division is one that he finds present, that he accepts as a given fact. Through the second he makes the world into his own affair, into something that has a

meaning for him. The third he regards as a goal towards which he ought unceasingly to strive.

Why does the world appear to man in this threefold way? A simple consideration will explain it. I cross a meadow covered with flowers. **The flowers make their colors known** to me through my eyes. That is **the fact I accept as given**. Having accepted the fact, I rejoice in the splendor of the colors. Through this I turn the fact into an affair of my own. **Through my feelings I connect the flowers with my own existence**. Then, a year later I go again over the same meadow. Other flowers are there. Through them new joys arise in me. My joy of the former year will appear as a memory. This is in me. The object that aroused it in me is gone, but the flowers I now see are of the same kind as those I saw the year before. They have grown in accordance with the same laws as have the others. If I have informed myself regarding this species and these laws, I then find them again in the flowers of this year, just as I found them in those of last year. So I shall perhaps muse, "The flowers of last year are gone and my joy in them remains only in my memory. It is bound up with my existence alone. What I recognized in the flowers of last year and recognize again this year, however, will remain as long as such flowers grow. That is something that revealed itself to me, but it is not dependent on my existence in the same way as my joy is. My feelings of joy remain in me. **The laws, the being of the flowers, remain outside of me in the world.**"

By these means man continually links himself in this threefold way with the things of the world. One should not, for the present, read anything into this fact, but merely take it as it stands. **From this it can be seen that man has three sides to his nature**. This and nothing else will, for the present, be indicated here by the three words, **body, soul and spirit**. Whoever connects any preconceived opinions or even hypotheses with these three words will necessarily misunderstand the following explanations. By body is here meant **that through which the things in the environment of a man reveal themselves to him**, as in the above example, the flowers in the meadow. By the word soul is signified **that by which he links the things to his own being, through which he experiences pleasure and displeasure**, desire and aversion, joy and sorrow in connection with them. By spirit is meant what becomes manifest in him when as Goethe expressed it, he looks at things as a "so to speak divine being." In this sense man consists of body, soul and spirit.

Through his body man is able to place himself for the time being in connection with things; through his soul he retains in himself the impressions they make on him; **through his spirit there reveals itself to him what the things retain for themselves**. Only when we observe man in these three aspects can we hope to throw light on his whole being, because they show him to be related in a threefold way to the rest of the world.

Through his body man is related to the objects that present themselves to his senses from without. The materials from the outer world compose his body, and the forces

of the outer world work also in it. **He observes the things of the outer world with his senses, and he also is able to observe his own bodily existence. It is impossible, however, for him to observe his soul existence in the same way.** Everything in him that is bodily process can be perceived with his bodily senses. His likes and dislikes, his joy and pain, neither he nor anyone else can perceive with bodily senses. **The region of the soul is inaccessible to bodily perception. The bodily existence of a man is manifest to all eyes; the soul existence he carries within himself as his world.** Through the spirit, however, the outer world is revealed to him in a higher way. The mysteries of the outer world, indeed, unveil themselves in his inner being. **[In spirit, he steps] out of himself and lets the things speak about themselves, about what has significance not for him but for them.** For example, man looks up at the starry heavens. The delight his soul experiences belongs to him. The eternal laws of the stars that he comprehends in thought, in spirit, belong not to him but to the stars themselves.

In this way, man is a citizen of three worlds. Through his body he belongs to the world that he also perceives through his body; through his soul he constructs for himself his own world; **through his spirit a world reveals itself to him that is exalted above [body and soul worlds].**

It seems obvious that because of the essential difference of these **three worlds**, a clear **understanding of them and of man's share in them can only be obtained by means of three different modes of observation.**

1. The Corporeal Nature of Man

In the event a reader objects to the notion of man's spirit being both the means and object of spiritual scientific inquiry, that this somehow proves it's subjective unreliability— consider how that science regards the physical body as both instrument and primary focus, a veritable microcosm of physical earth. One must admit that the body's form and function is what it is because the physical world shapes it so and requires it to be so if a body is ever to serve as its agent of cognition. That is, actually, a basic assumption of Darwin's theory of evolution. My physical body is an outgrowth, a branch or blossom produced from and bound to the larger body of earth.

We learn to know man's body through bodily senses, and the manner of observing it cannot differ from the way in which we learn to know other objects perceived by the senses. **As we observe minerals, plants and animals, so can we also observe man.** He is related to these three forms of existence. **Like the minerals, he builds his body** out of natural substances; **like the plants, he grows and propagates** his species; **like the animals, he perceives the objects around him and builds up his inner experiences** on the basis of the impressions they make on him. Thus, a mineral, a plant and an animal existence may be ascribed to man.

The differences in structure of minerals, plants and animals correspond with the three forms of their existence. It is this structure — the shape — that is perceived through the senses, and that alone can be called body. Now **the human body is different from that of the animal**. This difference must be recognized, whatever may otherwise be thought of the relationship of man to animals. Even the most extreme materialist who denies all soul cannot but admit the truth of this passage uttered by Carus in his *Oragnon der Natur und des Geistes*. “**The finer, inner construction of the nervous system and especially of the brain** remains still an unsolved problem for the physiologist and the anatomist. That **this concentration of structures ever increases in the animal kingdom and reaches in man a stage unequalled in any other being** is a fully established fact — a fact that is of the deepest significance in regard to the mental evolution of man. Indeed, we may go so far as to say it is really **a sufficient explanation of that evolution**. Where, therefore, the structure of the brain has not developed properly, where its smallness and poverty are in evidence as in the case of microcephali and idiots, it goes without saying that we can no more expect the appearance of original ideas and of knowledge than we can expect the propagation of the species from persons with completely stunted reproductive organs. On the other hand, **a strong and beautifully developed build of the whole man, and especially of the brain**, will certainly not in itself take the place of genius but it will at any rate **supply the first and indispensable condition for higher knowledge**.”

Just as one ascribes to the human body the three forms of existence, mineral, plant and animal, so one must ascribe to it a fourth — the distinctively human form. Through his mineral existence man is related to everything visible; through his plantlike existence to all beings that grow and propagate their species; through his animal existence to all those that perceive their surroundings and by means of external impressions have inner experiences; through his human form of existence he constitutes, even **in regard to his body alone, a kingdom by himself**.

2. The Soul Nature of Man

Man's soul nature, as his own inner world, is different from his bodily nature. When attention is turned to even the simplest sensation, what is personally his own comes at once to the fore. Thus **no one can know whether one person perceives even a simple sensation in exactly the same way as another**. It is known that there are people who are color-blind. They see things only in various shades of grey. Others are only partially color-blind. Because of this they are unable to distinguish between certain shades of color. The picture of the world that their eyes gives them is different from that of so-called normal persons. The same holds good more or less in regard to the other senses. Thus it will seem without further elaboration that **even simple sensations belong to the inner world**. I can perceive with my bodily senses the red table that another person perceives but I cannot perceive his sensation of red. We must, therefore, describe sensation as belonging **to the soul**. If this single fact is grasped quite clearly, we shall soon **cease to**

regard inner experiences as mere brain processes or something similar. Feeling must link itself with sensation. One sensation causes us pleasure, another displeasure. These are stirrings of our inner life, our soul life. **In our feelings we create a second world in addition to the one working on us from without. A third is added** to this — the world of the will. **Through the will we react on the outer world thereby stamping the impress of our inner being upon it.** The soul of man, as it were, flows outwards in the activities of his will.

Cosmically viewed, this might appear as worlds crashing –Andromeda on a collision course with the Milky Way.

The actions of man differ from the occurrences of outer nature in that they bear the impress of his inner life. Thus the soul as man's own possession stands **confronting the outer world.** He receives from the outer world the incitements, but he creates in response to these incitements a world of his own. **The body becomes the foundation of the soul being of man.**

Do we, as scientific fools, build our cosmological “house” on a foundation of sand? The winds and waves of spiritual reality must eventually judge the integrity of that construct.

3. The Spiritual Nature of Man

The soul nature of man is not determined by the body alone. Man does not wander aimlessly and without purpose from one sensation to another [*like plants or lower animals*], nor does he act under the influence of every casual incitement [*as do higher animals*] that plays upon him either from without or through the processes of his body. **Man thinks about his perceptions and his acts.** By thinking about his perceptions he gains knowledge of things. By thinking about his acts he introduces a reasonable coherence into his life. **He knows that he will worthily fulfill his duty as a man only when he lets himself be guided by correct thoughts in knowing as well as in acting.** The soul of man, therefore, is **confronted by a twofold necessity.** By the **laws of the body** it is governed by natural necessity. It allows itself **also** to be governed by **the laws that guide it to exact thinking** because it voluntarily acknowledges their necessity. Nature subjects man to the laws of changing matter, but he subjects himself to the laws of thought. **By this means he makes himself a member of a higher order than the one to which he belongs through his body. This order is the spiritual.** The spiritual is as different from the soul as the soul is from the body. As long as only the particles of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen that are in motion in the body are spoken of, we do not have the soul in view. Soul life begins only when within the motion of these particles the feeling arises, “I taste sweetness,” or, “I feel pleasure.” Likewise, **we do not have the spirit in view as long as merely those soul experiences are considered** that course through anyone who gives himself over entirely to the outer world and his bodily life. **This soul life is rather the basis of the spiritual just as**

the body is the basis [foundation] of the soul life. The biologist is concerned with the body, the investigator of the soul — the psychologist — with the soul, and the investigator of the spirit with the spirit. It is incumbent on those who would **understand the nature of man by means of thinking**, first to make clear to themselves **through self-reflection the difference between body, soul and spirit.**

Jesse Penn-Lewis, late 19th century Welsh revivalist, references GH Pember and AR Fausset regarding this scriptural principle in her book, Soul and Spirit:

"The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart ..."(Hebrews 4:12, R.V.).

This remarkable passage in Hebrews clearly sets forth the distinction between soul and spirit, the need of the "dividing" of one from the other and the means whereby this is done, so that the believer may become a truly "spiritual" man, living "according to 'God in the spirit'" (I Peter 4:6). Pember points out, in regard to this passage, that here the Apostle "claims for The Word of God, the power of separating and, as it were, taking to pieces, the whole being of man, spiritual, psychic, soulish and corporeal even as the priest flayed and divided limb from limb the animal for the burnt offering...."

Fausset writes, "the Word of God is 'living' and powerful 'energetically efficacious (Greek)', reaching through even to the separation of the animal-soul from the spirit, the higher part of man", and "piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow ... distinguishing what is spiritual from what is carnal and animal in him, the spirit from the soul". Also, "The Word of God divides the closely joined parts of man's immaterial being, soul and spirit...." An image taken from the "literal dividing of joints and penetrating to so as to open out the marrow by the priest's knife".

* * *

Once again the distinction between soul and spirit gives the key. As we have seen, the "soul" is either governed by the Spirit of God through the human spirit, thus drawing life from above (see John 3:3), or it is governed and animated by the animal life from the body --the lower realm-- or by the latent soul powers drawn out into action, and oftentimes mistaken for the spiritual. In the first case, governed by the Spirit of God, the man is a "spiritual man", and his "soul" is "saved ", or in the second, the man is an "animal-soul ", and his soul is lost. He that "loveth his life (psuche)", said the Lord, "shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (psuche) in this world shall keep it unto life (zoe) eternal" (John 12:24, 25).

... "Power" that results in the building up of "self" with compulsory forces at work upon others, simply means that the psychic powers have been developed, instead of being kept latent and unused by the exercise of the Cross. This alone makes way for the outflow of the Holy Spirit, who works upon the consciences of men, not by forcing and compelling power, but in conviction of the conscience by the light and truth of the Word of God.

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Note Jude verse 19: "Sensual" (lit. "animal-souled") as opposed to the "spiritual", or "having the Spirit". It is translated "the natural man" in I Corinthians 2:14. In the three-fold division of man's being --body, soul and spirit-- the due state in God's design is that "the spirit", which is the recipient of the Holy Spirit uniting man to God, should be first, and [as SPIRITUAL man] should rule the soul, which stands intermediate between the body and spirit; but in the NATURAL man the spirit is sunk into subservience to the animal-soul, which is earthly in its motives and aims. The CARNAL (I Corinthians 3:1) sink somewhat lower, for in these the flesh, the lowest element and corrupt side of man's bodily nature, reigns paramount.

Contrast this to the kundalini yoga ideal (also some Christian contemplatives), selfishly seeking a "no-self" realization marking the "end of desire", where the individual soul becomes basically indistinguishable from universal spirit, as if it had never been born. The born-again Christian disciple, as well as the anthroposophist, will experience this 'oneness' state of consciousness along the way, but never as the goal of spiritual development. This doctrine, as developed by Ms Penn-Lewis in her other famous book, War on the Saints, has even more significance for the final section of Steiner's book. She identifies passivity of thinking and the resulting compromise of free will, disorder, divisiveness and obsession (with self-image and influence) to be chief indicators of counterfeit empowerment, where true spirit power has been deceptively eclipsed by "fallen" soul power prematurely awakened from latency:

"Nothing supernatural should be felt by the senses, but by the spirit. . . Counterfeits of today are generally wrought upon the soulish - or sense life - of believers who have not learnt to distinguish between soul and spirit." (pgs. 16-17)

"The counterfeit of the Presence of God is mainly felt upon the body, and by the physical senses, in conscious 'fire', 'thrills', etc. The counterfeit of the Presence in the atmosphere is felt by the senses of the body, as 'breath',

'wind', etc., whilst the mind is passive or inactive. The person affected by this counterfeit "presence" will be moved almost automatically to actions he would not perform of his own will, and with all his faculties in operation. He may not even remember what he has done when under the 'power' of this 'presence', just as a sleep-walker knows nothing of his actions when in that state. The inaction of the mind can often be seen by the vacant look in the eyes." (p. 153).

"The Presence of God": Known in and by the human spirit, through the Holy Spirit. When He fills the atmosphere of a room the spirit of man is conscious of it, not his senses. The faculties of those present are alert and clear and they retain freedom of action. The spirit is made tender (Psa. xxxiv.18), and the will pliable to the will of God. All the actions of a person moved by the true and pure Presence of God are in accord with the highest ideal of harmony and grace" (P. 152).

4. Body, Soul and Spirit (See also Addendum 3)

Man can only come to a true understanding of himself when he grasps clearly the significance of thinking within his being. The brain is the bodily instrument of thinking. A properly constructed eye serves us for seeing colors, and the suitably constructed brain serves us for thinking. **The whole body of man is so formed that it receives its crown in the physical organ of the spirit, the brain.** The construction of the human brain can only be understood by considering it in relation to its task — that of being **the bodily basis for the thinking spirit**. This is borne out by a comparative survey of the animal world. Among the amphibians the brain is small in comparison with the spinal cord; in mammals it is proportionately larger; in man it is largest in comparison with the rest of the body.

There are many prejudices prevalent regarding such statements about thinking as are presented here. Many **people are inclined to under-value thinking and to place higher value on the warm life of feeling or emotion**. Some even say it is not by sober thinking but by warmth of feeling and the immediate power of the emotions that we raise ourselves to higher knowledge. People who talk in this way are **afraid they will blunt the feelings by clear thinking**. This certainly does result from ordinary thinking that refers only to matters of utility. In the case of thoughts that lead to higher regions of existence, what happens is just the opposite. There is no feeling and no enthusiasm to be compared with the sentiments of warmth, beauty and exaltation that are enkindled through the pure, crystal-clear thoughts that refer to the higher worlds. **The highest feelings are, as a matter of fact, not those that come of themselves, but those that are achieved by energetic and persevering thinking**

The human body is so constructed that it is adapted to thinking. The same materials and forces that are present in the mineral kingdom are so combined in the human body that thought can manifest itself by means of this combination. This

mineral structure built up in accordance with its function will be called in the following pages the physical body of man.

Organized with reference to the brain as its central point, this mineral structure comes into existence by propagation and reaches its fully developed form through growth. **Man shares propagation and growth in common with plants and animals. Through propagation and growth what is living differentiates itself from the lifeless mineral. Life gives rise to life by means of the germ [or seed].** Descendant follows forefather from one living generation to another. The forces through which a mineral originates are directed upon the substances of which it is composed. A quartz crystal is formed through the forces inherent in the silicon and oxygen that are combined in the crystal. The forces that shape an oak tree must be sought for indirectly in the germ-cells of the mother and father plants. The form of the oak is preserved through propagation from forefather to descendent. **Thus, there are inner determining conditions innate in living things,** and it was a crude view of nature that held lower animals, even fishes, to have evolved out of mud. The form of the living passes itself on by means of heredity. How a living being develops depends on what father and mother it has sprung from — in other words, on the species to which it belongs. The materials it is composed of are continually changing but the species remains constant during life and is transmitted to the descendants. Therefore, it is the species that determines the combination of the materials. This force that determines species will here be called life-force. **Mineral forces express themselves in crystals, and the formative life-force expresses itself in the species or forms of plant and animal life.**

The mineral forces are perceived by man by means of his bodily senses, and he can only perceive things for which he has such senses. Without the eye there is no perception of light; without the ear no perception of sound. The lowest organisms have only one of the senses belonging to man — a kind of sense of touch. * (See Addendum 2) These organisms have no awareness of the world perceptible to man with the exception of those mineral forces that they perceive by the sense of touch. In proportion to the development of the other senses in the higher animals does their surrounding world, which man also perceives, become richer and more varied. **It depends, therefore, on the organs of a being whether what exists in the outer world exists also for the being itself as something perceptible.** What is present in the air as a certain motion becomes in man the sensation of hearing. **Man, however, does not perceive the manifestations of the life-force through the ordinary senses.** He sees the colors of the plants; he smells their perfume. The life-force, however, **remains hidden from this form of observation.** Even so, those with ordinary senses have just as **little right to deny that there is a life-force as the man born blind has to deny that colors exist.** Colors are there for the person born blind as soon as he has undergone an operation. In the same way, the various species of plants and animals created by the life-force — not merely the individual plants and animals — are **present for man as objects of perception as soon as the necessary organ unfolds** within him. An entirely new world opens out to him through the unfolding of this organ. He **now perceives not merely the colors,** the

odors and other characteristics of living beings, **but the life itself** of these beings. **In each plant and animal he perceives, besides the physical form, the life-filled spirit-form.** In order to have a name for this spirit-form, let it be called the *ether body or life body*.*

* The author wishes to note that long after this book was written, he gave the name “**formative-force body**” to what is here called etheric or life body, (also cp. Das Reich, fourth book of the first year's issue, January, 1917). He felt himself moved to give it this name because he believes that one cannot do enough **to prevent the misunderstanding due to confusing what is here called etheric body with the “vital force” of older natural science.** In what concerns the rejection of this older concept of a vital force in the sense of modern natural science, the author shares, in a certain sense, the standpoint of those who are opposed to assuming the existence of such a vital force. The purpose of assuming such a vital force **was to explain how the inorganic forces work** in a special way in the organism. But [they did not distinguish] between the activity of the inorganic in the organism and its activity outside in the inorganic world. **The laws of inorganic nature are in the organism no different from what they are in the crystal. But in the organism there is present something that is not inorganic — the formative life. The etheric body, or formative force body, lies at the base of this formative life.** By assuming its existence, the rightful task of natural science is not interfered with, namely, to observe the workings of forces in inorganic nature and to follow these workings into the organic world, and further, to refuse to think of these operations within the organism as being modified by a special [*inorganic*] vital force. To a true spiritual science this seems justified. The spiritual researcher speaks of the etheric body insofar as there manifests in the organism something different from what shows itself in the lifeless. In spite of all this, the author does not feel himself impelled to replace the term “etheric body” by the other “formative force body,” since within the whole connected range of what is said here, any misunderstanding is excluded for anyone who really wants to comprehend. Such a misunderstanding can only arise when the term is used in a development that cannot exhibit this connection. (Compare this also with what is said under Addendum 1.)

To the investigator of spiritual life this *ether body* is for him not merely a product of the materials and forces of the physical body, but a real independent entity that first calls forth into life these physical materials and forces. We speak in accordance with spiritual science when we say that a purely physical body derives its form — a crystal, for example — through the action of the physical formative forces innate in the lifeless. **A living body does not receive its form through the action of [material] forces because in the moment life has departed from it and it is given over to the physical forces only, it falls to pieces. The ether body is an organism that preserves the physical body from dissolution every moment during life. In order to see this body, to perceive it in another being, the awakened spiritual eye is required.** Without this ability its existence as a fact can still be accepted on logical grounds, but it can be seen with the spiritual eye just as color can be seen with the physical eye.

We should not take offense at the expression “ether body.” **“Ether” here designates something different from the hypothetical ether of the physicist.** We should regard it simply as a name for what is described here. The structure of the physical body of the human being is a kind of reflection of its purpose, and this is also the case with the human etheric body. It can be understood only when it is considered in relation to the thinking spirit. **The human etheric body differs from that of plants and animals through being organized to serve the purposes of the thinking spirit.** Man belongs to the mineral world through his physical body, and he belongs through this etheric body to the life-world. **After death the physical body dissolves into the mineral world, the ether body into the life-world.** By the word **“body”** is meant **whatever gives a being shape or form.** The term body must not be confused with a bodily form perceptible to the physical senses. Used in the sense implied in this book, the **term body can also be applied to such forms as soul and spirit may assume.**

The life-body is still something external to man. With the first stirrings of sensation the inner self responds to the stimuli of the outer world. You may search forever in what is called the outer world but you will be unable to find sensation in it. Rays of light stream into the eye, penetrating it until they reach the retina. There they cause chemical processes in the so-called visual-purple. **The effect of these stimuli** is passed on through the optic nerve to the brain. There further physical processes arise. **Could these be observed, we would simply see more physical processes** just as elsewhere in the physical world. **If I am able also to observe the ether body, I shall see how the physical brain process is at the same time a life-process.** The **sensation of blue color** that the recipient of the rays of light experiences, however, I can find nowhere in this manner. **It arises only within the soul of the recipient.** If, therefore, the being of this recipient consisted only of the physical and ether bodies, sensation could not exist. The activity by which sensation becomes a fact differs essentially from the operations of the formative life-force. By that activity **an inner experience is called forth** from these operations. **Without this activity there would be a mere life-process such as we observe in plants.** Imagine a man receiving impressions from all sides. Think of him as the source of the activity mentioned above, flowing out in all directions from which he is receiving these impressions. In all directions sensations arise in response to the stimuli. **This fountain of activity is to be called the sentient soul.** This sentient soul is **just as real as the physical body.** If a man stands before me and I disregard his sentient soul by thinking of him as merely a physical body, it is exactly as if, instead of a painting, I were to call up in memory merely the canvas.

A statement similar to the one previously made in reference to the ether body must be made here **about perceiving the sentient soul.** The **bodily organs are blind to it. The organ by which life can be perceived as life is also blind to it.** The ether body is seen by means of this organ, and so through **a still higher organ the inner world of sensation** can become a special kind of supersensible perception. **Then a**

man not only senses the impressions of the physical and life world, but he beholds the sensations themselves. The sensation world of another being is spread out before a man with such an organ like an external reality. One must distinguish between experiencing one's own sensation world, and looking at the sensation world of another person. **Every man, of course, can see into his own sensation world. Only the seer with the opened spiritual eye can see the sensation world of another. Unless a man is a seer, he knows the world of sensation only as an inner one,** only as the peculiar hidden experiences of his own soul. With the opened spiritual eye there shines out before the outward-turned spiritual gaze what otherwise lives only in the inner nature of another being.

* * *

In order to prevent misunderstanding, it may be expressly stated here that the seer does not experience in himself what the other being experiences as the content of his world of sensation. The other being experiences the sensations in question from the point of view of his own inner nature. **The seer, however, becomes aware of a manifestation or expression of the sentient world.**

This metaphysical sense is more commonly experienced when entering a room full of people and immediately intuiting their common mind or contention --such as is said regarding an atmosphere of discord 'so thick, you could cut it with a knife'. A person with more highly developed spiritual senses will perceive a similar atmosphere about individual people and even associate certain colors with their sentient soul body, like an aura surrounding the physical form. (Steiner addresses this more directly later.) Even less developed children will "tune in" to perceive subliminally changes in the group mood and mind of the household where they live, especially that of the mother in the family. They feel that external mood-body as part of their individual world, however, just as they also feel their own thoughts and feelings are undifferentiated from the inner worlds of other family members. This is evident until they mature to recognize the distinction between their soul and the souls of others. At least regarding people that are part of their daily lives, young children perceive less of inner versus outer, public versus private worlds.

The sentient soul's activity depends entirely on the ether body. The sentient soul draws from the ether body what it in turn causes to gleam forth as sensation. Since the ether body is the life within the physical body, the sentient soul is also directly **dependent on the physical body [as formed by the life-body]. Only with correctly functioning and well-constructed eyes are correct color sensations possible.** It is in this way that the nature of the body affects the sentient soul, and it is thus determined and limited in its activity by the body. It lives within the

limitations fixed for it by the nature of the body. **The body accordingly is built up of mineral substances, is vitalized by the ether body, and itself limits the sentient soul.** A man, therefore, who has the organ mentioned above for seeing the sentient soul sees it limited by the body, but its limits do not coincide with those of the physical body. This soul **extends somewhat beyond the physical body and proves itself to be greater than the physical body.** The force through which its limits are set, however, proceeds from the physical body. Thus, between the physical body and the ether body on the one hand, and the sentient soul on the other, another distinct member of the human constitution inserts itself. This is the **soul body or sentient body.** It may also be said that one part of the ether body is finer than the rest and this finer part forms a unity with the sentient soul, whereas the coarser part forms a kind of unity with the physical body. The sentient soul, nevertheless, extends, as has been said, beyond the soul body.

What is here called **sensation is only a part of the soul nature.** (The expression sentient soul is chosen for the sake of simplicity.) Connected with sensations are the **feelings of desire and aversion, impulses, instincts, passions.** All these bear the same character of individual life as do the sensations, and are, **like them, dependent on the bodily nature.**

* * *

The **sentient soul enters into mutual action** and reaction with the body, and **also with thinking, with the spirit.** In the first place, **thinking serves the sentient soul.** **Man forms thoughts about his sensations and thus enlightens himself regarding the outside world.** The child that has burnt itself thinks it over and reaches the thought, "Fire burns." **Man does not follow his impulses, instincts, and passions blindly but his reflection upon them brings about the opportunity for him to gratify them.** What one calls **material civilization is motivated entirely in this direction.** It consists in the services that thinking renders to the sentient soul. Immeasurable quantities of thought-power are directed to this end. It is thought-power that has built ships, railways, telegraphs and telephones, and by far the greatest proportion of these conveniences serves only to satisfy the needs of sentient souls. **Thought-force permeates the sentient soul similarly to the way the formative life-force permeates the physical body.** The formative life-force connects the physical body with forefathers and descendants and thus brings it under a system of laws with which the purely mineral body is in no way concerned. In the same way **thought-force brings the soul under a system of laws to which it does not belong as mere sentient soul.** Through the sentient soul man is related to the animals. In animals also we observe the **presence of sensations, impulses, instincts and passions.** **The animal, however, obeys these immediately** and they do not become interwoven with independent thoughts thereby transcending the immediate experiences. * (See Addendum 4.) This is **also the case to a certain extent with undeveloped human beings.** The mere sentient soul, therefore, differs from the evolved higher member of the soul that brings thinking into its service.

This soul that is served by thought will be termed the *intellectual soul*. It could also be called the **mind soul**.

In social psychology studies, we called this facet of human perception 'conceptual categorization'. In experience, for a percept to be real, the observer must be able to fit it to a pre-conceived conceptual category. The importance of this principle is portrayed in the Genesis account of man's early consciousness as the "naming" of individual phenomena.

The intellectual soul permeates the sentient soul. The one who possesses the organ for seeing the soul sees the intellectual soul as a separate entity in contrast to the mere sentient soul.

* * *

By thinking, the human being is led above and beyond his own personal life. He acquires something that extends beyond his soul. He comes to take for granted his **conviction that the laws of thought are in conformity with the laws of the universe**, and he feels at home in the universe because this conformity exists. This conformity is one of the weighty facts through which he learns to know his own nature. He searches in his soul for truth and through this truth it is not only the soul that speaks but also the things of the world. **What is recognized as truth by means of thought has an independent significance that refers to the things of the world, and not merely to one's own soul.** In my delight at the starry heavens I live in my own inner being. The thoughts I form for myself about the paths of heavenly bodies have the **same significance for the thinking of every other person as they have for mine**. It would be absurd to speak of my delight were I not in existence. It is not in the same way absurd, however, to speak of my thoughts, even without reference to myself, because the truth that I think today was true also yesterday and will be true tomorrow, although I concern myself with it only today. If a fragment of **knowledge gives me joy, the joy has significance just as long as it lives in me**, whereas the *truth* of the knowledge has its significance quite independently of this joy.

By grasping the truth, the soul connects itself with something that carries its value in itself. This value does not vanish with the feeling in the soul any more than it arose with it. What is really truth neither arises nor passes away. It has a significance that cannot be destroyed. This is not contradicted by the fact that certain human truths have a value that is transitory inasmuch as they are recognized after a certain period as partial or complete errors. Man must say to himself that truth after all exists in itself, although his conceptions are only transient forms of manifestation of the eternal truths. Even someone who says, like Lessing, that he contents himself with the eternal striving for truth because the full pure truth can only exist for a god, does not deny the eternity of truth but establishes it by such an utterance. Only what has an eternal significance in itself can call forth an eternal striving for it. Were truth not in itself independent, if it acquired its value and

significance through the feelings of the human soul, it could not be the **one unique goal for all mankind. By the very fact of our striving for truth, we concede its independent being.**

As it is with the true, so is it with the truly *good*. Moral goodness is independent of inclinations and passions inasmuch as it does not allow itself to be **commanded by them but commands them.** Likes and dislikes, desire and loathing belong to the personal soul of a man. Duty stands higher than likes and dislikes. **Duty may stand so high in the eyes of a man that he will sacrifice his life for its sake.** A man stands the higher the more he has ennobled his inclinations, his likes and dislikes, so that without compulsion or subjection they themselves obey what is recognized as duty. The morally good has, like truth, its eternal value in itself and does not receive it from the sentient soul.

By causing the self-existent true and good to come to life in his inner being, man raises himself above the mere sentient soul. An imperishable light is kindled in it. In so far as the soul lives in this light, it is a participant in the eternal and unites its existence with it. What the soul carries within itself of the true and the good is immortal in it. Let us call what shines forth in the soul as eternal, the *consciousness soul*. We can speak of consciousness even in connection with the lower soul stirrings. The most ordinary everyday sensation is a matter of consciousness. To this extent animals also have consciousness. The kernel of human consciousness, that is, **the soul within the soul**, is what is here meant by consciousness soul. The consciousness soul is thus distinguished as a member of the soul **distinct from the intellectual soul, which is still entangled in the sensations, impulses and passions.** Everyone knows how a man at first counts as true what he prefers in his feelings and desires. Only that truth is permanent, however, that has freed itself from all flavor of such sympathy and antipathy of feeling. **The truth is true even if all personal feelings revolt against it. That part of the soul in which this truth lives will be called consciousness soul.**

Thus three members must be distinguished in the soul as in the body, namely, *sentient* soul, *intellectual* soul and *consciousness* soul. As the body works from below upwards with a limiting effect on the soul, so the spiritual works from above downwards into it, expanding it. The more the soul fills itself with the true and the good, the wider and the more comprehensive becomes the eternal in it. **To him who is able to see the soul, the splendor radiating forth from a man in whom the eternal is expanding is just as much a reality as the light that streams out from a flame is real to the physical eye.**

For the seer, the corporeal man counts as only part of the whole man. **The physical body as the coarsest structure lies within others that mutually interpenetrate it and each other. The ether body fills the physical body as a life-form. The soul body (astral shape) can be perceived extending beyond this on all sides. Beyond this, again, extends the sentient soul, and then the intellectual soul, which grows the larger the more of the true and the good it receives into itself.**

This true and good causes the expansion of the intellectual soul. On the other hand, a man living only and entirely according to his inclinations, likes and dislikes, would have an intellectual soul whose limits coincide with those of his sentient soul. **These organizations, in the midst of which the physical body appears as if in a cloud, may be called the human aura.** The perception of this aura, when seen as this book endeavors to present it, indicates an enrichment of man's soul nature.

* * *

In the course of his development **as a child, there comes a moment** in the life of a [human] when **for the first time he feels himself to be an independent being distinct from all the rest of the world.** For sensitive natures, it is a significant experience. The poet, Jean Paul, says in his autobiography, "I shall never forget the event that took place within me, hitherto narrated to no one and of which I can give place and time, when I stood present at **the birth of my self-consciousness.** As a small child I stood one morning at the door of the house looking towards the wood-pile on my left, when suddenly **the inner vision, I am an I,** came upon me like a flash of lightning from heaven and has remained shining ever since. **In that moment my ego had seen itself for the first time and forever.** Any deception of memory is hardly to be conceived as possible here, for no narrations by outsiders could have introduced additions to an **occurrence that took place in the holy of holies of a human being,** and of which the novelty alone gave permanence to such everyday surroundings." It is known that **little children say of themselves, "Charles is good."** "Mary wants to have this." One feels it is to be right that they **speak of themselves as if of others because they have not yet become conscious of their independent existence, and the consciousness of the self is not yet born in them.** * (See Addendum 5.)

Through self-consciousness man describes himself as an independent being separate from all others, as "I." In his "I" he brings together all that he experiences as a being with body and soul. Body and soul are the carriers of the ego or "I," and in them it acts. Just as the physical body has its center in the brain, so has the soul its center in the ego. **Man is aroused to sensations by impacts from without; feelings manifest themselves as effects of the outer world; the will relates itself to the outside world, realizing itself in external actions. The "I" as the particular and essential being of man remains quite invisible.** With excellent judgment, therefore, does Jean Paul call a man's recognition of his ego an "occurrence taking place only in the veiled holy of holies of a human being," for with his "I" man is quite alone. **This "I" is the very man himself. That justifies him in regarding his ego as his true being. He may, therefore, describe his body and his soul as the sheaths or veils within which he lives, and he may describe them as bodily conditions through which he acts.** In the course of his evolution he learns to regard these tools ever more as **instruments of service to his ego.** The little word "I" is a name which differs from all others. Anyone who reflects in an appropriate manner on the nature of this name will find that in so doing an avenue opens itself to the understanding of the human being in the deeper

sense. Any other name can be applied to its corresponding object by all men in the same way. Anybody can call a table, table, or a chair, chair. This is not so with **the name “I.” No one can use it in referring to another person.** Each one can call only himself “I.” Never can the name “I” reach my ears from outside when it refers to me. Only from within, only through itself, can the soul refer to itself as “I.” **When man therefore says “I” to himself, something begins to speak in him that has to do with none of the worlds from which the sheaths so far mentioned are taken. The “I” becomes increasingly the ruler of body and soul.**

At least, it is to be hoped that the “I” effectively rules all lower members of individual being, exercising the moral authority we call conscience. The great tragedy, of course, is how many people’s ego never achieves that status, never finds itself by yielding itself to the spirit; else it is eclipsed by a lesser pretender of true ego-- the inner-focused self-image. This certainly lends an expanded meaning to the commandments, Thou shalt not promote any other god before me ... Thou shalt not make representing me [I am that I am] any graven image.

This also expresses itself in the aura. **The more the “I” is lord over body and soul, the more definitely organized, the more varied and the more richly colored is the aura.** The effect of the “I” on the aura **can be seen by the seer. The “I” itself is invisible even to him.** This remains truly within the “veiled holy of holies of a human being.” The “I” absorbs into itself the rays of the light that flame forth in him as eternal light. As he gathers together the experiences of body and soul in the “I,” so too he causes the thoughts of truth and goodness to stream into the “I.” **The phenomena of the senses reveal themselves to the “I” from the one side, the spirit reveals itself from the other. Body and soul yield themselves up to the “I” in order to serve it, but the “I” yields itself up to the spirit in order that the spirit may fill it to overflowing. The “I” lives in body and soul, but the spirit lives in the “I”. What there is of spirit in it is eternal, for the “I” receives its nature and significance from that with which it is bound up.** In so far as it lives in the physical body, it is subject to the laws of the mineral world; through its ether body to the laws of propagation and growth; by virtue of the sentient and intellectual souls, to the laws of the soul world; **in so far as it receives the spiritual into itself it is subject to the laws of the spirit. What the laws of mineral and of life construct, come into being and vanishes. The spirit has nothing to do with becoming and perishing.**

* * *

The “I” lives in the soul. Although **the highest manifestation of the “I” belongs to the consciousness soul,** one must, nevertheless, say that **this “I” raying out from it fills the whole soul, and through it exerts its action upon the body.** In the “I” the spirit is alive. **The spirit sends its rays into the “I” and lives in it as in a**

sheath or veil, just as the “I” lives in its sheaths, the body and soul. The spirit develops the “I” from within, outwards; the mineral world develops it from without, inwards. **The spirit forming and living as “I” will be called *spirit self* because it manifests as the “I,” or ego, or self of man.** The difference between the spirit self and the consciousness soul can be made clear in the following way. **The consciousness soul is in touch with the self-existent truth that is independent of all antipathy and sympathy. The spirit self bears within it the same truth, but taken up into and enclosed by the “I,” individualized by it, and absorbed into the independent being of the individual. It is through the eternal truth becoming thus individualized and bound up into one being with the “I” that the “I” itself attains to the eternal.**

Jesus repeated the prophet’s description of this as ‘the laws of God written on the fleshly tablets of a man’s heart’. He also assured, when we find ourselves in the pinch of a moral dilemma, we needn’t worry about what we should say, as the spirit will then step up and speak for the soul.

The *spirit self* is a revelation of the spiritual world within the “I,” just as from the other side sensations are a revelation of the physical world within the “I.” In what is red, green, light, dark, hard, soft, warm, cold one recognizes the revelations of the corporeal world. **In what is true and good are to be found the revelations of the spiritual world. In the same sense in which the revelation of the corporeal world is called sensation, let the revelation of the spiritual be called intuition.** * (See Addendum 6.) **Even the most simple thought contains intuition because one cannot touch thought with the hands or see it with the eyes. Its revelation must be received from the spirit through the “I.”** If an undeveloped and a developed man look at a plant, there lives in the ego of the one something quite different from what exists in the ego of the other. Yet the sensation of both are called forth by the same object. The difference lies in this, that the one can form far more perfect thoughts about the object than the other. **If objects revealed themselves through sensation only, there could be no progress in spiritual development. Even the savage is affected by nature, but the laws of nature reveal themselves only to the thoughts fructified by intuition of the more highly developed man.** The stimuli from the outer world are felt also by the child as incentives to the will, but the **commandments of the morally good disclose themselves to him in the course of his development in proportion as he learns to live in the spirit and understand its revelations.**

There could be no color sensations without physical eyes, and there could be no intuitions without the higher thinking of the spirit self. As little as sensation creates the plant in which color appears does intuition create the spiritual realities about which it is merely giving knowledge.

The ego of a man that comes to life in the soul draws into itself messages from above, from the spirit world, through intuitions, and through sensations it draws in

messages from the [physical –e.Ed] world. In so doing it makes the spirit world into the individualized life of its own soul, even as it does the physical world by means of the senses. **The soul, or rather the “I” flaming forth in it, opens its portals on two sides — towards the corporeal and towards the spiritual.**

Now the physical world can only give information about itself to the ego by building out of physical materials and forces a body in which the conscious soul can live and possess within its organs for perceiving the corporeal world outside itself.

The spiritual world, on the other hand, with its spiritual substances, and spiritual forces, builds a spirit body in which the “I” can live and, through intuitions, perceive the spiritual. (It is evident that the expressions spirit substance, spirit body, contain contradictions according to the literal meaning of the words. They are only used to direct attention to what, in the spiritual region, corresponds to the physical substance, the physical body of man.)

Within the physical world each human body is built up as a separate being, and within the spirit world the spirit body is also built up separately. For man there is an inner and an outer in the spirit world just as in the physical world there is an inner and an outer. Man takes in the materials of the physical world around him and assimilates them in his physical body, and he also takes up the spiritual from the spiritual environment and makes it into his own. The spiritual is the eternal nourishment of man. Man is born of the physical world, and he is also born of the spirit through the eternal laws of the true and the good. He is separated as an independent being from the spirit world outside him, and he is separated in the same manner from the whole physical world. **This independent spiritual being will be called the *spirit man*.**

If we investigate the human physical body, it is found to contain the same materials and forces as are to be found outside in the rest of the physical world. It is the same with the spirit man. In it pulsate the elements of the external spirit world. In it the forces of the rest of the spirit world are active. Within the physical skin a being is enclosed and limited that is alive and feels. It is the same in the spirit world. **The spiritual skin that separates the spirit man from the unitary spirit world makes him an independent being within it, living a life within himself and perceiving intuitively the spiritual content of the world.** Let us call this “spiritual skin” (auric sheath) the spirit sheath. Only it must be kept clearly in mind that **the spiritual skin expands continually with advancing human evolution so that the spiritual individuality of man (his auric sheath) is capable of enlargement to an unlimited extent.**

The spirit man lives within this spirit sheath. It is built up by the spiritual life force in the same way as the physical body is by the physical life force. In a similar way to that in which one speaks of an ether body, one must speak of an ether spirit in reference to the spirit man. **Let his ether spirit be called *life spirit*.** The spiritual nature of man is thus composed of **three parts, *spirit man*, *life spirit* and *spirit self*.**

For one who is a seer in the spiritual regions, this spiritual nature of man is, as the higher, truly spiritual part of the aura, a perceptible reality. He sees the spirit man as life spirit within the spirit sheath, and he sees how this life spirit grows continually larger by taking in spiritual nourishment from the spiritual external world. Further, he sees how the spirit sheath continually increases, widens out through what is brought into it, and how the spirit man becomes ever larger and larger. In so far as this becoming larger is seen spatially, it is of course only a picture of the reality. This fact notwithstanding, the human soul is directed towards the corresponding spiritual reality in conceiving this picture because the **difference between the spiritual and the physical nature of man is that the physical nature has a limited size while the spiritual nature can grow to an unlimited extent.**

Whatever of spiritual nourishment is absorbed has an eternal value. The human aura is accordingly composed of two interpenetrating parts. Color and form are given to the one by the physical existence of a man, and to the other by his spiritual existence. The ego marks the separation between them in such wise that the physical element after its own manner surrenders itself and builds up a body that allows a soul to live within it. **The “I” surrenders itself and allows the spirit to develop in it, which now for its part permeates the soul and gives the soul its goal in the spirit world. Through the body the soul is enclosed in the physical. Through the spirit man there grow “wings” for movement in the spiritual world.**

* * *

In order to comprehend the whole man one must think of him as put together out of the components mentioned above. The body builds itself up out of the world of physical matter in such a way that this structure is adapted to the requirements of the thinking ego. It is permeated with life force and becomes thereby the etheric or life body. As such it opens itself through the sense organs towards the outer world and becomes the soul body. The sentient soul permeates this and becomes a unity with it. The sentient soul does not merely receive the impacts of the outer world as sensations. It has its own inner life, fertilized through thinking on the one hand and through sensations on the other. The sentient soul thus becomes the intellectual soul. It is able to do this by opening itself to the intuitions from above as it does to sensations from below. Thus it becomes the consciousness soul. This is possible because the spirit world builds into it the organ of intuition, just as the physical body builds for it the sense organs. **The senses transmit sensations by means of the soul body, and the spirit transmits to it intuitions through the organ of intuition. The spiritual human being is thereby linked into a unity with the consciousness soul, just as the physical body is linked with the sentient soul in the soul body.** Consciousness soul and spirit self form a unity. In this unity the spirit man lives as life spirit in the same way that the ether body forms the bodily life basis for the soul body. Thus, as the physical body is enclosed in the physical

skin, so is the spirit man in the spirit sheath. **The members of the whole man are therefore as follows:**

- 1. Physical Body**
- 2. Ether or life body**
- 3. Soul body**
- 4. Sentient soul**
- 5. Intellectual soul**
- 6. Consciousness soul**
- 7. Spirit self**
- 8. Life spirit**
- 9. Spirit man**

Soul body (C) and sentient soul (D) are a unity in the earthly human being. In the same way consciousness soul (F) and spirit self (G) are a unity. Thus there come to be seven members in earthly man.

1. Physical body
2. Etheric or life body
3. Sentient soul body
4. Intellectual soul
5. Spirit-filled consciousness soul
6. Life spirit
7. Spirit man

In the soul the “I” flashes forth, receives the impulse from the spirit, and thereby becomes the bearer [see, kernel] of the spiritual human being. Thus man participates in the three worlds, the physical, the soul and the spiritual. He is rooted in the physical world through his physical body, ether body and soul body, and through the spirit self, life spirit and spirit man he comes to flower in the spiritual world. The stalk, however, that takes root in the one and flowers in the other is the soul itself.

This arrangement of the members of man can be expressed in a simplified way, but one entirely consistent with the above. Although the human “I” flashes forth in the consciousness soul, it nevertheless penetrates the whole soul being. The parts of this soul being are not at all as distinctly separate as are the members of the bodily nature. They interpenetrate each other in a higher sense. **If then one regards the intellectual soul and the consciousness soul as the two sheaths of the “I” that belong together, with the “I” itself as their kernel, then one can divide man into physical body, life body, *astral body* and “I.” The expression *astral body* designates what is formed by considering the soul body and sentient soul as a unity. This expression is found in the older literature,** and may be applied here in a somewhat broad sense to what lies beyond the sensibly perceptible in the constitution of man. Although the sentient soul is in certain respects energized by the “I,” it is still so intimately connected with the soul body that a single expression is justified when united. When now the “I” saturates itself with the spirit self, this

spirit self makes its appearance in such a way that the astral body is transmuted from within the soul. In the astral body the impulses, desires and passions of man are primarily active in so far as they are felt by him. Sense perceptions also are active therein. Sense perceptions arise through the soul body as a member in man that comes to him from the external world. **Impulses, desires and passions arise in the sentient soul in so far as it is energized from within, before this inner part has yielded itself to the spirit self.** This expresses itself in the illumination of the impulses, desires and passions by what the “I” has received from the spirit. **The “I” has then, through its participation in the spiritual world, become ruler in the world of impulses and desires.** To the extent to which it has become this, **the spirit self manifests in the astral body, and the astral body is transmuted thereby. The astral body itself then appears as a two-fold body — partly untransmuted and partly transmuted.** We can, therefore, designate the spirit self manifesting itself in man as the transmuted astral body.

This bears special significance where Steiner discusses (in other books) the phenomenon of the two-fold Guardian of the Threshold. There is the “self” that I imagine myself to be, formed of physical experiences and desires. However, this transitory self-image is soon (hopefully) to be superceded by the eternal Self that I was truly destined to be and meriting the hoped-for Eternal Name of scripture’s promise. This distinction is also the reality behind the soul experience known as “purgatory” after physical death. My soul is finally compelled by Reality, the Throne of Judgement, to shed all transitory attachments, at which time it either awakens again as a spirit self or slumbers on as undeveloped soul self.

A similar process takes place in the human individual when he receives the life spirit into his “I.” The life body then becomes transmuted, penetrated with life spirit. The life spirit manifests itself in such a way that the life body becomes quite different from what it was. For this reason **it can also be said that the life spirit is the transmuted life body.** If the “I” receives the spirit man, it thereby receives the necessary force to penetrate the physical body. Naturally, that part of **the physical body thus transmuted is not perceptible to the physical senses, because it is just this spiritualized part of the physical body that has become the spirit man.** It is then present to the physical senses as physical, and insofar as this physical is spiritualized, it has to be beheld by spiritual perceptive faculties, because **to the external senses the physical, even when penetrated by the spiritual, appears to be merely sensible.**

Taking all this as basis, **the following arrangement may also be given of the members of man:**

- 1. Physical body**
- 2. Life body**

3. Astral body
4. I, as soul kernel
5. Spirit self as transmuted astral body
6. Life spirit as transmuted life body
7. Spirit man as transmuted physical body

Chapter II: Re-Embodiment of the Spirit and Destiny

(See also Addendum 7)

This chapter is intended to be a very basic introduction to Steiner's view regarding reincarnation of the human spirit. As I have emphasized elsewhere, he did NOT espouse repeated earth lives as told by the Hindu, Buddhist or western New Age spiritualist. Every human soul lives once as the consciousness of a physical body and after death answerable to the "parent" spirit for any enduring fruit it may yield ... or not --while all else of transitory earth so treasured by the soul is lost like dross in a smelter's furnace. This distinction between the temporal soul and its father-spirit is basic to understanding Steiner's cosmology. The eternal pre-individuate human spirit seeks distinction through successive soul existences, until that one fateful lifetime when a child soul first yields dominion to the spirit, chooses freely death to itself as a mere soul-self, finally to be reborn as a true son of the Eternal, the individuated spirit-self.

I find it tragic irony that the great quest of eastern spiritualists is to re-attain consciousness of the pre-individuated state, abandoning the spirit's original destiny. It is clear in the Genesis account, that the Creator sought fellowship with man as a separate self-aware individual. Man was granted free capacity either to rebel and reject God's overtures --thus closing the door to further spiritual advancement-- or to welcome His company and become truly like Him in self-sacrificial creative potential. The chaser after Oneness-with-the-ALL is perpetually self-absorbed in that endeavor, seeking to exchange his temporal identity, his only sense of self, for a no-self. And there he finds the end of his journey, 'nirvana'. There the enemies of mankind's destiny may dine unhindered upon the flickering flames of dying souls. There is no rebirth, no eternal name, no spiritual self-realization. The cycles of life and death were all vain and meaningless after all. The only future for seeking souls is to be made spiritual fodder for the belly of the Beast.

Steiner makes it clear how Jesus Christ provided for redemption of man's true destiny. But first, here, he challenges the spirit-seeker to open his or her mind to the possibility, yea, probability that this one lifetime cannot explain it all. The individual soul is a seed, a part of the larger promise that the spirit may awaken in the soul as a free man, thinking and feeling and willing with a distinctly human point of view. Meanwhile, the angels—both the Dark and the Light—watch and observe and learn of the Goodness of God, so they too may become more like Him.

I reprint here a severely condensed version of this chapter, as I fear the modern Christian reader will be more fatigued than challenged (or entertained) by exhaustive rationalizations of this doctrine. (Such was the expected style of discourse in Steiner's day.) After all, as Apostle Paul emphasizes, Today is the Day of Salvation. This life is to be our focus. Fantasy about past or future lives will serve only to distract one's soul unnecessarily from its true and proper mission. All the rest of it—my life situation, fated meetings, sufferings and triumphs—are all in God's hands. He knows best what will be just and propitious for the salvation of my soul into the spirit. I will continue content in that assurance until the day my eyes are fully opened to apprehend my beginning and my end, the Alpha and Omega.

The soul lives between body and spirit. The impressions coming to it through the body are transitory, enduring only as long as the body opens its organs to the things of the outer world. **Only while the rose is in my line of vision can my open eye perceive its color.** The presence of the things of the outer world as well as of the bodily organs is necessary in order that an impression, a sensation or a perception can occur. **But what I have recognized in my mind as truth concerning the rose does not pass with the present moment,** and as regards its truth, it is not in the least dependent on me. It would be true even though I had never stood before the rose.... **The enduring element in the soul comes under observation at the moment we become aware that the soul has experiences not limited by its perishable factor.** Again the important point is not whether these experiences come to consciousness primarily through perishable processes of the bodily organization, but the fact that they contain something that does indeed live in the soul, yet is independent of the transient process of perception. **The soul** is placed between the present and duration in that it **holds the middle place between body and spirit.** It also **mediates between the present and duration.** It preserves the present for remembrance, thus rescuing it from impermanence by taking it up into the duration of its own spiritual being.... **By remembrance the soul preserves the yesterday; by action it prepares the tomorrow.**

* * *

.... **What I have done today endures for tomorrow. Through the deed it acquires permanence** just as my impressions of yesterday have become permanent for my soul through memory.

.... Whether, in the relation between the world and my “I,” a certain new quality is present or not depends upon whether or not I have made an impression on another person through my action. **I am quite a different person in my relationship to the world after having made an impression on my surroundings.**

.... **Is it not possible that what has retained the imprint of the ego in the external world waits also to approach the human soul from without, just as memory, in response to a given inducement, approaches it from within?** In the following considerations we shall inquire whether there is anything in human life that, starting from this possibility, points to a reality.

* * *

Let us **first consider memory**. How does it originate? The mental image called forth through remembrance is **not an old preserved visualization**, but a new one. Recollection consists in the fact, not that a visualization can be revived, but that we can present to ourselves again and again what has been perceived. **What reappears is something different from the original visualization....**

.... Who, then, conjures up yesterday's picture in my soul? **It is conjured up by the same being in me that was present during my experience yesterday, and that is also present today.** In the previous explanations **this being has been called soul.** Were it not for this faithful preserver of the past, each external impression would always be new to us. It is certain that **the soul imprints upon the body, as though by means of a [stamp], the process through which something becomes a recollection.** Yet it is the soul itself that must make this impression and **then perceive what it has made, just as it perceives something external. Thus the soul is the preserver of memory.**

As preserver of the past, the soul continually gathers treasures for the spirit. That I can distinguish between what is correct or incorrect depends on the fact that **I, as a man, am a thinking being able to grasp the truth in my spirit.** Truth is eternal, and it could always reveal itself to me again in things even if I were to lose sight of the past and each impression were to be a new one to me. The spirit within me, however, is not restricted to the impressions of the present alone. The soul extends the spirit's horizon over the past, and **the more the soul is able to bring to the spirit out of the past, the more does it enrich the spirit.** The soul thus hands on to the spirit what it has received from the body. **The spirit of man, therefore, carries at each moment of its life a twofold possession within itself. Firstly, the eternal laws of the good and the true, and secondly, the remembrance of the experiences of the past.** What the human spirit [chooses to do] is accompanied

under the influence of these two factors. If we want to understand a human spirit we must, therefore, know two different things about it. Firstly, how much of the eternal has been revealed to it, and secondly, how much treasure from the past lies stored up within it.

These treasures by no means remain in the spirit in an unchanged shape. **The impressions that man acquires from his experiences fade gradually from memory. Not so, however, their fruits.** We do not remember all the experiences lived through during childhood while acquiring the arts of reading and writing. Yet we could not read or write had we not had such experiences, and had not their fruits been **preserved in the form of abilities.** Such is the transmutation that the spirit effects in the treasures of memory. The spirit consigns to its fate whatever can lead to pictures of the separate experiences, and extracts therefrom only the force necessary for enhancing its abilities. Thus **not a single experience passes by unutilized.** The soul preserves each one as memory, and **from each the spirit draws forth all that can enrich its abilities and the whole content of its life.** The human spirit grows through assimilated experiences, and although one cannot find past experiences in the spirit as if in a storeroom, one nevertheless finds their effects in the abilities that man has acquired.

* * *

Thus far spirit and soul have been considered only within **the period lying between birth and death. We cannot stop there....** The physical materials and forces build up the body during life. The forces of propagation enable another body, a body with a like form, to proceed from it — that is to say, one able to be the bearer of the same life body. **Each life body is a repetition of its forebear.** Only because it is such does it appear, **not in any chance form, but in that passed on to it by heredity.** The forces that make possible my human form lay in my forefathers.

.... **No two human beings have the same spiritual form.** Observations should be made in this region in a manner just as quietly and matter-of-factly as they would be made in the physical world. **It cannot be said that the differences in man in spiritual respects arise only from the differences in their environment and their upbringing.** No, this is by no means the case because two people under similar influences of environment and upbringing develop in quite different ways....

* * *

Men differ from their animal fellow-creatures on earth through their physical form, but regarding this form they are, within certain limits, like one another. **There is only one human species.** However great may be the differences between races, people, tribes and personalities, as regards the physical body, the resemblance between man and man is greater than between man and any animal species. All that finds expression in the human species is conditioned by the inheritance of

descendants from forebears, and the human form is bound to this heredity. As the lion can inherit its physical bodily form from lion forebears only, **so can man inherit his physical bodily form only from human forebears.**

The physical similarity of men is apparent to our physical eyes, and **the differences of their spiritual forms lie revealed to our unbiased spiritual gaze.** There is one fact that shows this clearly — the existence of a man's biography. Were a man merely a member of a species, no biography could exist. A lion or a dove are interesting insofar as they belong to the lion or the dove species. The separate being in all its essentials has been understood when the species has been described. It matters little whether one has to do with father, son or grandson. What they have of interest in them, father, son and grandson have in common. **What a man signifies, however, is found only in his individuality, not in his being merely a member of a species.** I have not in the least understood the nature of Mr. Smith of Hoboken if I have described his son or his father. I must know his own biography. **Anyone who reflects on the nature of biography realizes that regarding the spiritual each man is himself a species.**

* * *

.... I have received my physical human form because of my descent from human forebears, but **whence have I received what finds expression in my biography?** **As physical man, I repeat the shape of my forebears. What do I repeat as spiritual man?**

As physical man I spring from other physical men because I have the same shape as the whole human species. The qualities of the species, accordingly, could thus be acquired only within the species. **As spiritual man I have my own shape just as I have my own biography. I can have obtained this shape, therefore, from no one but myself. I did not enter the world with undefined, but with defined soul-predispositions, and since the course of my life as it comes to expression in my biography is determined by these predispositions, my work upon myself cannot have begun with my birth. That is to say, I must have existed as spiritual man before my birth.** I certainly did not exist in my forebears because as spiritual human beings, they differ from me. My biography is not explainable through theirs. On the contrary, **as a spiritual being I must be the repetition of someone through whose biography mine can be explained....**

.... In the same way, therefore, that the physical human form is again and again a repetition, a reincarnation of a being of the human species, so too **the spiritual man must be a reincarnation of the same spiritual man, since, as spiritual man, each individual is, in fact, his own species.**

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In such observations as the above, the presuppositions are supplied for following man beyond birth and death. Within the boundaries formed by birth and death, man belongs to the worlds of physical body, of soul, and of spirit. **The soul forms the intermediate link between body and spirit**, inasmuch as it endows the third member of the body, the soul body, with the capacity for sensation, and inasmuch as it permeates the first member of the spirit, the spirit self, as consciousness soul. Thus it **takes part and lot during life with the body as well as with the spirit**. This comes to expression in its whole existence. How the sentient soul can unfold its capabilities will depend on the organization of the soul body. On the other hand, the extent to which the spirit self can develop itself within the consciousness soul will depend on the life of that soul. **The more highly organized the soul body, the more complete the intercourse that the sentient soul can develop with the outer world. The spirit self will become that much richer and more powerful the more the consciousness soul brings nourishment to it.** It has been shown that **during life this nourishment is supplied to the spirit self through assimilated experiences and the fruits of these experiences.** The interaction of the soul and spirit described above can, of course, only take place where soul and spirit are within each other, interpenetrating each other, that is, **within the union of *spirit self* with *consciousness soul*.**

.... [W]hile the difference in the physical body corresponding to races, peoples and tribes is the smallest, and while in general the ether body presents a preponderating likeness and in single individuals a greater divergence, **in the soul body** the difference is already a considerable one. In it **is expressed what is felt to be the external, personal uniqueness of an individual.** Thus, it is **also the bearer of that part of this personal uniqueness that is passed on from parents, grandparents, and so forth, to their descendants.** As has been explained, it is true that the soul **as such leads a completely self-contained life of its own in shutting itself up with its inclinations and disinclinations, its feelings and passions.** It is nevertheless active as a whole and this whole comes to expression also in **the *sentient soul*.** Because the sentient soul **interpenetrates and fills up the soul body**, the latter forms itself according to the nature of the soul and can in this way, **as the bearer of heredity, pass on tendencies, passions and other qualities from forefathers to children.**

.... In the space of a few years the matter that composes our physical body is entirely renewed. That this **matter takes the form of the human body**, and that **it always renews itself again within this body**, depends upon the fact that **it is held together by the ether body.** The form of the ether body is not determined by events between birth or conception, and death alone, but is **dependent on the laws of heredity that extend beyond birth and death.** That **soul qualities also can be transmitted by heredity** — that the process of physical heredity receives an infusion from the soul — is due to the fact that the soul body can be influenced by the sentient soul.

Now, **how does the interaction between soul and spirit proceed?** During life, the spirit is bound up with the soul in the way shown above. **The soul receives from the spirit the gift of living within the good and the true, and thereby of bringing the spirit itself to expression within its own life, within its tendencies, impulses and passions.** From the world of the spirit, **the spirit self brings to the “I” the eternal laws of the true and the good.** These link themselves through the consciousness soul with the experiences of the soul's own life. **These experiences themselves pass away, but their fruits remain.** The spirit self receives an abiding impression by having been linked with them. **When the human spirit encounters an experience similar to one to which it has already been linked, it sees therein something familiar, and is able to take up an attitude towards it quite different from what would be the case were the spirit facing it for the first time. This is the basis of all learning. The fruits of learning are acquired capacities.** The fruits of the transitory life are in this way **graven on the eternal spirit.** Do we not see these fruits? **Whence spring the innate predispositions and talents described above as characteristic of the spiritual man?** Surely only from capacities of one kind or another that a man brings with him when he begins his earthly life. In certain respects, these capacities resemble exactly those that we can also acquire for ourselves during life.

.... We have either to regard such abilities, founded on innate capacities, with wonder, or to consider them as fruits of experiences that the spirit self has had through the medium of a soul. They have been graven on this spirit self, and **since they have not been implanted in this life, they must have been in a former one.** **The human spirit is its own species. Just as man as a physical being belonging to a species bequeaths his qualities within the species, so does the spirit bequeath its qualities within its species, that is, within itself.** In each life, the human spirit appears as a repetition of itself with the fruits of its former experiences in previous lives. This life is consequently the repetition of others and brings with it what the spirit self has, by work, acquired for itself in the previous life. **When the spirit self absorbs something that can develop into fruit, it permeates itself with the *life spirit*. Just as the life body reproduces the [physical] form from species to species, so does the *life spirit* reproduce the *soul* from personal existence to personal existence.**

Through the preceding considerations the thought that seeks the reason for certain life processes of man in repeated earth lives is raised into the sphere of validity. **This idea can receive its full significance only by means of observations that spring from spiritual insight as it is acquired by following the path of knowledge described** at the close of this book. Here it was only intended to show that ordinary observation rightly oriented by thinking already leads to this idea. Observation of this kind, it is true, will at first perceive the idea something like a silhouette, and it will not be possible to defend the idea entirely against the objections advanced by observation that is neither accurate nor guided aright by thinking. On the other hand, it is true that **anyone who acquires such an idea**

through ordinary thoughtful observation, makes himself ready for supersensible observation....

* * *

The experiences of the soul become lasting not only within the boundaries of birth and death, but beyond death. The soul, however, does not stamp its experiences only on the spirit that flashes up within it. It impresses them, as has been shown, on the outer world also through its deeds. What a man did yesterday is today still present in its effects. A picture of **the connection between cause and effect is given in the simile of sleep and death.** Sleep has often been called the younger brother of death....

The human spirit is no more created anew when it begins its earthly life than a man is newly created every morning. Let us try to make clear to ourselves what happens when entrance into this life takes place. A physical body, receiving its form through the laws of heredity, makes its appearance. This body becomes the bearer of a spirit that repeats a previous life in a new form. Between the two stands the soul that leads a self-contained life of its own. Its inclinations and disinclinations, wishes and desires, minister to it. It presses thought into its service. As sentient soul, it receives the impressions of the outer world and carries them to the spirit in order that the spirit may extract from them the fruits that are permanent. It plays, as it were, the part of intermediary, and its task is fulfilled when it is adequate to this part. The body forms impressions for the sentient soul that transforms them into sensations, retains them in the memory as thought images, and surrenders them to the spirit to hold throughout duration. **The soul is really that part of a man through which he belongs to his earthly life. Through his body he belongs to the physical human species; through it he is a member of this species. With his spirit he lives in a higher world. The soul binds the two worlds together for a time.**

The physical world into which the human spirit enters, however, is no strange field of action to it. On it the traces of the spirit's actions are imprinted. Something in this field of action belongs to the spirit. It bears the impress of, and is related to, the spirit's being. Just as the soul formerly transmitted the impressions from the outer world to the spirit in order that they might become enduring in it, so now the soul, as the spirit's organ, has converted the capacities bestowed upon it by the spirit into deeds that are also enduring in their effects. Thus the soul has actually flowed into these actions. **In the effects of his actions, a man's soul lives a second independent life.** This statement provides us with a **motive for examining life in order to see how the processes of destiny enter into it....** [T]hen only one more really intimate observation of life is needed to show us that in what comes to us through certain experiences of destiny there is something that lays hold on the ego from without, just as memory, working from within, lays hold on us in order to make a past experience flash up again. **Thus we can make ourselves fitted to perceive in the experiences of destiny, how a former action**

of the soul finds its way to the ego, just as in memory an earlier experience, if called forth by an external cause, finds its way into the mind as a thought.

.... If an experience of destiny “befalls” us, and we feel that it is connected with the ego like something that has fashioned itself out of the ego's inner nature, then we can only think we have to do with the consequences of the actions of former earth lives. We see that we are led through an intimate thoughtful comprehension of life to the supposition — paradoxical to ordinary consciousness — that the experiences of destiny of one earth life are connected with the deeds of previous earth lives. This idea again can only receive its full content through supersensible knowledge; lacking this, it remains like a mere silhouette....

Only one part of my deed is in the outer world; the other is in myself....

Through an action that the soul has performed, **there lives in the soul the energetic predisposition to perform another action that is the fruit of the first action.** The soul carries this as a necessity within itself until the subsequent action has taken place. One might also say that through an action there has been **imprinted upon the soul the necessity of carrying out the consequences of that action.**

By means of its actions the human spirit has really brought about its own destiny. In a new life it finds itself linked to what it did in a former one.... On that account sleep is an apt image of death because a man during sleep is withdrawn from the field of action in which his destiny awaits him. **While we sleep, events in this field of action pursue their course. We have for a certain time no influence on this course of events. Our life on a new day depends, nevertheless, on the effects of the deeds of the previous day. Our personality actually embodies or incarnates itself anew every morning in our world of action.** What was separated from us during the night is spread out around us, as it were, during the day. So it is with the actions of former human embodiments or incarnations. They are bound up with a man as his destiny, just as life in the dark Kentucky caves remains bound up with the animals that, by migrating into them, have lost their power of sight. Just as these animals can only live in the surroundings in which they have placed themselves, **so the human spirit is able to live only in the surroundings that it has created for itself by its acts.** That I find in the morning a certain state of affairs, created by me on the previous day, is brought about by the immediate course of events. That I find surroundings when I reincarnate corresponding to the results of my deeds in a previous life, is brought about by the relationship of my reincarnated spirit with the things in the surrounding world. From this we can form an idea of how the soul is set into the human constitution. The physical body is subject to the laws of heredity. The human spirit, on the contrary, has to incarnate over and over again, and its law consists in its bringing over the fruits of the former lives into the following ones. **The soul lives in the present, but this life in the present is not independent of the previous lives because the incarnating spirit brings its destiny with it** from its previous incarnations. This destiny determines life. **What impressions the soul will be able to have, what wishes it will be able to have gratified, what sorrows**

and joys shall develop for it, with what men and women it shall come into contact — all this depends upon the nature of the actions in the past incarnations of the *spirit*. The soul must meet those people again in a subsequent life with whom it was bound up in a previous life because the actions that have taken place between them must have their consequences. When this soul seeks re-embodiment, those other souls that are bound up with it will also strive towards their incarnation at the same time. The life of the soul is, therefore, the result of the self-created destiny of the human spirit. **The course of man's life** between birth and death is determined in a threefold way. In consequence, he is **dependent in a threefold way on factors that lie on the other side of birth and death**. The body is subject to the **law of heredity**; the soul is subject to its **self-created destiny**. We call this destiny, created by man himself, **his karma**. The spirit is under the **law of re-embodiment**, repeated earth lives. One can accordingly also express the relationship between spirit, soul and body in the following way. *[Only the] spirit is immortal*; birth and death reign over the body according to the laws of the physical world; the soul life, which is subject to destiny, mediates the connection of both during an earthly life. **All further knowledge about the being of man presupposes acquaintance with the three worlds to which he belongs**. These three worlds are dealt with in the following pages.

*I fear that traditional Calvinistic doctrine repeats the error of Catholicism in failing adequately to distinguish spirit from human soul. Eternal damnation of the sentient soul would indeed be a cruel tragedy unworthy of a loving Creator, unless that end also means a merciful extinguishing of the sufferable consciousness. Scripture does indeed teach eternal consequences suffered by unredeemed **spirits**, most of whom are not even human, cast into a lake of fire or bottomless abyss. But even this is referenced as a destiny 'prepared' for them whose names are not found written in the book (chronicle) of Life. Therefore, Steiner suggests elsewhere that these spirits become subjects of a new covenant, an alternate plan of salvation, the manner of which human minds can never comprehend.*

Thinking that frankly faces the phenomena of life and is not afraid to follow out to their final consequences the thoughts resulting from **a living, vivid contemplation of life can, by pure logic, arrive at the conception of the law of karma and repeated incarnations**. Just as it is true that for the seer with the opened spiritual eye, past lives lie like an open book before him as experience, so it is true that the truth of these things can become obvious to the unbiased reason that reflects upon it.

Chapter III: The Three Worlds

Even a strict materialist will tell me I have three identities, at least. First my inner experience of sensations, then another private world or self-image wherein I interpret and describe that experience to myself and to others. Both these personal selves are often at odds with my public persona as actually experienced by others, and the health of my personal and social lives may be measured by the disharmony of those three me's. The material scientist would also say that all my me's are illusions, projections of personhood determined by the realities of my physical history, chemistry, neurology and subjective perceptions of others. And once that physical me is passed, my private and public lives are ended also ... perhaps mercifully so.

In other words, the logical conclusion of materialism should be that man's soul is not real, any more than a supposed spirit can be so, nor can these realms of experience persist apart from physical life. Inner experience and outward personality-- it's all imagination, a neuro-electrical phantom or shadow of solid reality.

The spiritual scientist starts with the opposite view and a far larger perspective regarding conscious being. Our physical self and the material world of objects, though experienced as solid, are the shadows. My mortal form is merely one temporary image or appearance of an enduring spiritual being. That body and its short lifetime cannot define the beginning and end of all I am. What's more, my public self is also an image, being a reflection (however imperfect) of the true spiritual Self, not the spurious creation of my private self. And that cherished inner world is not so private as I like to believe. Inner feelings, ideas and intentions are rather the outward "face" of a being answerable to the cosmic community of self-conscious ones. Many years of ASP experience has effectively re-oriented my outlook thus far, at least.

1. The Soul World

Our study of man has shown that he belongs to three worlds. The materials and forces that build up his body are taken from the world of physical bodies. He has knowledge of this world through the perceptions of his outer physical senses. Anyone trusting to these senses alone and developing only their perceptive capacities can gain no enlightenment for himself concerning the two other worlds, the soul world and the world of the spirit. A man's ability to convince himself of the

reality of a thing or a being depends on whether he has an organ of perception, a sense for it. It may, of course, easily lead to misunderstanding if we call the higher organs of perception spiritual senses as is done here because in speaking of senses we involuntarily connect the thought of the physical with them. The physical world is, in fact, designated the sensory, in contradistinction to the spiritual. In order to avoid this misunderstanding, we must take into account the fact that higher *senses* are spoken of here only in a comparative or metaphorical sense. **Just as the physical senses perceive the physical, so do the soul and spiritual senses perceive the soul and spiritual worlds. The expression, sense, will be used as meaning simply organ of perception.** A man would have no knowledge of light and color had he no eye sensitive to light; he would know nothing of sound had he no ear sensitive to sound. In this connection the German philosopher, Lotze, says rightly, "Without a light-sensitive eye and a sound-sensitive ear, the whole world would be dark and silent. There would be in it just as little light or sound as there could be toothache without the pain-sensitive nerve of the tooth."

In order to see what is said here in the proper way, one need only think how entirely differently the world must reveal itself to man, [as distinguished] from the way it does to the lower forms of animal life that have only a kind of sense of touch or feeling spread over the whole surface of their bodies. Light, color and sound certainly cannot exist for them in the same way they do for beings gifted with ears and eyes. The vibrations caused by the firing of a gun may have an effect on them also if, as a result, sensitive areas are excited, but in order that these vibrations of the air exhibit themselves to the soul as a shot, an ear is necessary. An eye is necessary in order that certain processes in the fine matter called ether reveal themselves as light and color. **We only know something about a being or thing because we are affected by it through one of our organs [of perception].**

This relationship of man with the world of realities is brought out extremely well by Goethe when he says, "It is really in vain that we try to express the nature of a thing. We become aware of effects and a complete history of these effects would indeed embrace the nature of that thing. We endeavor in vain to describe the character of a man. If instead we put together his actions and deeds, a picture of his character will present itself to us. Colors are the deeds of light — deeds and sufferings . . . Colors and light are, to be sure, linked in the most precise relationship, but we must think of them both as belonging to the whole of nature, because through them the whole of nature is engaged in revealing itself especially to the eye. In like manner, nature reveals itself to another sense.

. . . Nature thus speaks downwards to the other senses — to known, unknown, and unrecognized senses. It thus speaks to itself and to us through a thousand phenomena. To the attentive, nature is nowhere either dead or silent."

It would not be correct were one to interpret this saying of Goethe as though the possibility of knowing the essential nature of things were [thereby denied]. Goethe does not mean that we perceive only the effects of a thing, and that the being

thereof hides itself behind them. He means rather that **one should not speak at all of a “hidden being.” The being is not behind its manifestation. On the contrary, it comes into view through the manifestation. This being, however, is in many respects so rich that it can manifest itself to other senses in still other forms. What reveals itself does belong to the being, but because of the limitations of the senses, it is not the whole being.** This thought of Goethe corresponds entirely with the views of spiritual science set forth here.

Just as in the body, eye and ear develop as organs of perception, as senses for bodily processes, so does a man develop in himself soul and spiritual organs of perception through which the soul and spiritual worlds are opened to him. For those who do not have such higher senses, these worlds are dark and silent, just as the bodily world is dark and silent for a being without eyes and ears. It is true that the relation of man to these higher senses is rather different from his relation to the bodily senses. It is good Mother Nature who sees to it, as a rule, that these latter are fully developed in him. They come into existence without his help. For the development of his higher senses, however, he must work himself. **If he wishes to perceive the soul and spirit worlds, he must develop soul and spirit, just as nature has developed his body** so that he might perceive the corporeal world around him and guide himself in it. Such a development of the higher organs not yet developed for us by nature itself is not unnatural because in the higher sense all that man accomplishes belongs also to nature.

Only the person who is ready to maintain that man should remain standing at the stage at which he left the hand of nature, could call the development of the higher senses unnatural. By him the significances of these organs is misunderstood, “unrecognized,” as indicated in the quotation of Goethe. Such a person might just as well oppose all human education because it also develops further the work of nature. He would also have to oppose operations upon those born blind, because almost the same thing that happens to the person born blind when operated upon happens to the man who awakens the higher sense in himself in the manner set forth in the last part of this book. **The world appears to him with new qualities, events and facts, about which the physical senses reveal nothing. It is clear to him that through these higher organs he adds nothing arbitrarily to reality, but that without them the essential part of this reality would have remained hidden from him.** The soul and spirit worlds are not to be thought of as being alongside or outside the physical world. They are not separated in space from it. Just as for persons born blind and operated upon, the previously dark world flashes out in light and colors, so do **things that previously were only corporeal phenomena reveal their soul and spirit qualities to anyone who is awakened in soul and spirit.** It is true, moreover, that **this world then becomes filled with other occurrences and beings that remain completely unknown to those whose soul and spirit senses are unawakened.** (The development of the soul and spirit senses will be spoken of in a more detailed way farther on in this book. Here these higher worlds themselves will be first described. **Anyone who denies their existence says nothing more**

than that he has not yet developed his higher organs. The evolution of humanity is not terminated at any one stage; it must always progress.)

The higher organs are often involuntarily pictured as too similar to the physical organs. It should be understood that **these organs are spiritual or soul formations.** It ought not to be expected, therefore, that what is perceived in the higher worlds should be only something like a cloudy, attenuated form of matter. As long as something is expected of this kind, no clear idea can be formed of what is really meant here by higher worlds. For many persons it would not be nearly as difficult as it actually is to know something about these higher worlds — of course, at first only about the elementary regions — if they did not form the idea that what they are to see is again merely rarefied physical matter. Since they take for granted something of this kind, they are not at all willing, as a rule, to recognize what they are really dealing with. They look upon it as unreal, and refuse to acknowledge it as something satisfactory. True, the higher stages of spiritual development are accessible only with difficulty. Those stages, however, that suffice for **the perception of the nature of the spiritual world** — and that is already a great deal — **should not be at all difficult to reach if people would first free themselves from the misconception that consists in picturing to themselves the soul and spiritual merely as a finer physical.**

Just as we do not know a man entirely when we have only visualized his physical exterior, so **also do we not know the world around us if we only know what the physical senses reveal to us about it.** Just as a photograph grows intelligible and living to us when we have become so intimately acquainted with the person photographed that we know his soul, so can **we really understand the corporeal world only when we gain a knowledge of its soul and spiritual basis. For this reason it is advisable to speak here first about the higher worlds, the worlds of soul and spirit, and only then judge the physical from the viewpoint of spiritual science.**

At this present stage of civilization **certain difficulties are encountered** by anyone speaking about the higher worlds **because this age is great above all things in its knowledge and conquest of the physical world.** Our words have, in fact, received their stamp and significance in relation to this physical world. We must, nevertheless, make use of these current words in order to form a link with something known. This, however, opens the door to **many misunderstanding on the part of those who are willing to trust only their external senses.** Much can at first be expressed and indicated only by means of similes and comparisons. This must be so, for such similes are a means by which the seeker is at first directed to these higher worlds, and through which his own ascent to them is furthered. Of this ascent I shall speak in a later chapter, in which the development of the soul and spiritual organs of perception will be dealt with. * (See Addendum 8.) **To begin with, man must gain knowledge of the higher worlds by means of similes. Only then is he ready to acquire for himself the power to see into them.**

Just as the matter and forces that compose and govern our stomach, heart, brain, lungs, and so forth, come from the physical world, so do our soul qualities, our impulses, desires, feelings, passions, wishes and sensations, come from the soul world. The soul of man is a member of this soul world, just as his body is part of the world of physical bodies. If we want at the outset to indicate a difference between the corporeal and soul worlds, we could say that **the soul world is in all objects and entities much finer, more mobile and plastic than the [physical].** It must be kept clearly in mind, however, that on entering the soul world **we enter a world entirely different from the physical.** If therefore, the words “coarser” and “finer” are used in this respect, readers must be fully aware that something is suggested by way of comparison that is, nevertheless, actually fundamentally different. This is true in regard to all that is said about the soul world **in words borrowed from the world of physical corporeality.** Taking this into account, we can say that **the formations and beings of the soul world consist in the same way of soul substances, and are directed by soul forces in much the same way as is the case in the physical world with physical substances and physical forces.**

Just as spatial extension and spatial movement are peculiar to corporeal formations, so are excitability and impelling desire peculiar to the things and beings of the soul world. For this reason the soul world is described as the **world of desires or wishes, or as the world of longing.** These expressions are borrowed from the human soul world. We must, therefore, hold fast to the idea that **the things in those parts of the soul world that lie outside the human soul are just as different** from the soul forces within it as the physical matter and forces of the external corporeal world are different from those parts that compose the physical human body. Impulse, wish, longing are names for the substantiality of the soul world. **To this substantiality let us give the name *astral*.** If we pay more attention specifically to the forces of the soul world, we can speak of desire-being, but it must not be forgotten that **the distinction between substance and force cannot be as sharply drawn** as in the physical world. **An impulse can just as well be called force as substance.**

The differences between the soul world and the physical have a bewildering effect on anyone who obtains a view of the soul world for the first time, but that is also the case when a previously inactive physical sense is opened. **The man born blind has first to learn after an operation how to guide himself through the world he has previously known only by means of the sense of touch.** Such a person, for example, sees the objects at first in his eyes, then outside himself, but they appear to him as though painted on a flat surface. **Only gradually does he grasp perspective and the spatial distance between things. In the soul world entirely different laws prevail** from those in the physical. To be sure, **many soul formations are bound to those of the other worlds.** The human soul, for instance, is **bound to the human body and to the human spirit.** The occurrences we can observe in it are, **therefore, influenced at the same time by the corporeal and spiritual worlds.** We have to take this into account in observing the soul world, and **we must take**

care not to claim as a law of the soul world occurrences due to the influence of another world. **When, for example, a man sends out a wish, that wish is brought to birth by a thought, by a conception of the spirit whose laws it accordingly follows.** Just as we can formulate the laws of the physical world by disregarding, for example, the influence of man on its processes, so the same thing is possible with regard to the soul world.

An important difference between soul and physical processes can be expressed by saying that the reciprocal action in the processes of the soul is much more inward than in the physical. In physical space there reigns, for example, the law of impact. When an ivory ball strikes a ball at rest, the resting ball will move in a direction that can be calculated from the motion and elasticity of the first. **In soul space the reciprocal action of two forms that encounter each other depends on their inner qualities. If they are in affinity they mutually interpenetrate and, as it were, grow together. They repel each other if their natures are in conflict.** In physical space there are also definite laws of vision. We see distant objects perspectively diminishing. When we look down an avenue, the distant trees appear closer together than those nearby. **In the soul space, on the contrary, all objects near or far appear to the clairvoyant at distances apart that are in accordance with their inner nature.** This is naturally a source of the most manifold errors for those who enter the soul world and wish to be at home there with the help of the rules they bring from the physical world.

During ASP, I eventually learned a key to movement. I had only to “want” an object or place in order to find myself transported. This did not, however, work always with people encountered there. In one setting, I felt as if attached to a giant spring or elastic cord: my will would pull me close to the person in view, only to be pulled or pressed back again repeatedly to a “safe” distance. I guess my soul proximity was not automatically so welcome. Perhaps that is also how I might determine that an entity belongs to my “inner” world, when I can’t shake it off or ditch it by merely wishing it so. This presents a real problem, the source of much confusion and fear on that side of consciousness.

One of the first things a man must acquire in order to make his way about the soul world **is the ability to distinguish the various kinds of forms** found there in much the same way he distinguishes solid, liquid, or air or gaseous bodies in the physical world. In order to do this, **he must know the two most important basic forces to be found in the soul world.** They may be called *sympathy* and *antipathy*. The nature of any soul formation is determined according to the way these basic forces operate in it. **The force with which one soul formation attracts others, seeks to fuse with them and to make its affinity with them effective,** must be designated as sympathy. Antipathy is **the force with which soul formations repel, exclude each other in the soul world.** It is the force with which

they assert their separate identities. The part played by a soul formation in the soul world depends upon the proportion in which these basic forces are present in it. In the first place, **we must distinguish three kinds of soul formations that are determined by** the way sympathy and antipathy work in them. That these formations differ from each other is due to **the fact that sympathy and antipathy have in them definitely fixed mutual relationships.** In all three both basic forces are present.

To begin with, let us consider **the first of these soul formations.** It attracts other formations in its neighborhood by means of the sympathy ruling it. Besides this sympathy, there is at the same time antipathy present by which it repels certain things in its surroundings. From the outside such a formation **appears to be endowed only with the forces of antipathy.** That, however, is not the case. **Both sympathy and antipathy are present in it, but the latter predominates.** It has the upper hand over the former. Such formations play **a self-seeking role in soul space.** They repel much that surrounds them, and lovingly attract but little to themselves. **They therefore move through the soul space as unchangeable forms.** The force of sympathy that they possess appears greedy. This **greed appears at the same time insatiable, as if it could not be satisfied, because the predominating antipathy repels so much of what approaches that no satisfaction is possible.** This kind of soul formation **corresponds with the solid physical bodies of the physical world.** This region of soul matter may be called *Burning Desire*. The part of Burning Desire that is mingled with the souls of animals and men determines in them what we call their **lower sensual impulses,** their dominating selfish instincts.

This is certainly the character of the entity first encountered by ASP sufferers, either a formless 'presence' perceived as preying upon them or a visible and touchable form --the 'old hag' or 'dark man' or even alien cosmonaut. I have suspected that these beings are actually the person's own lower desires and impulses objectified. For men, the encounter is with a female figure, however often bestial or ugly --the succubus. For women, the threat is usually from a male personality, also frequently showing inhuman features --the incubus. Steiner elsewhere reveals that the gender of our lower immaterial being is actually opposite to that of our physical form, the source of history's many fertility cults. The mature seeker, transforms this inner sexual tension into the motive for spiritual development. Otherwise it appears as a barrier or 'guardian' of the spiritual threshold, biblically the angel with the flaming sword obstructing the gate into Paradise.

In the second kind of soul formations the two basic forces preserve a balance. Accordingly, antipathy and sympathy act in them **with equal strength.** They approach other formations with **a certain neutrality.** They act on them as though

related, but **without especially attracting or repelling**. They erect, as it were, **no solid barrier between themselves and their surroundings**. They constantly allow other formations in their surroundings to act on them. We can, therefore, **compare them with the liquids of the physical world**. There is **nothing of greed** in the way such formations attract others to themselves. The activity meant here may be recognized, for example, when the human soul receives the sensation of a certain color. If I have the sensation of a red color, I receive, to begin with, a neutral stimulus from my surroundings. Only when pleasure in the red color is added to this stimulus does another soul activity come into play. What effects the neutral stimulus is the action of soul formations standing in such reciprocal relationship that sympathy and antipathy preserve an equal balance. The soul substance considered here must be described as **a perfectly plastic and mobile substance**. It does not move through soul space in a self-seeking way like the first, but by such means that its being receives impressions everywhere, and **shows itself to have affinity with much that approaches it**. An expression that might be applied to it is *Mobile Sensitivity*.

The third variety of soul formations is that in which **sympathy has the upper hand over antipathy**. Antipathy produces self-seeking self-assertion. This, however, retires into the background when inclination towards the things in the surrounding world takes its place. Let us picture such a formation within the soul space. **It appears as the center of an attracting sphere that spreads over the objects surrounding it**. Such formations must be specially designated as *Wish Substance*. This designation appears to be the right one because **through the existing antipathy, although relatively weaker than the sympathy, the attraction works in such a way that it endeavors to bring the attracted objects within the soul formation's own sphere**. The sympathy thus receives an **underlying tone of selfishness**. This wish substance **may be likened to the air or gaseous bodies of the physical world**. Just as a gas strives to expand on all sides, so wish substance **spreads itself out in all directions**.

Higher levels of soul substance characterize themselves in that one of the basic forces, **antipathy, retires completely into the background and sympathy alone shows itself to be really effective**. Now this sympathy is able to make its power felt primarily within the various parts of the soul formation itself. These parts act with reciprocal attraction upon each other. The force of sympathy within a soul formation comes to expression in **what one calls Liking**, and each lessening of this sympathy is Disliking. **Disliking is only lessened liking**, as cold is only a lessened warmth. **Liking and disliking is what lives in man as the world of feelings** in the more restricted sense of the word. Feeling is the life and activity of the soul within itself. **What is called the comfort of the soul depends on the way the feelings of liking and disliking, attraction and repulsion, interact within the soul**.

A still higher stage is represented by those soul formations in which **sympathy does not remain shut up within the region of their own life**. They, and also the fourth stage, differ from the three lower stages by virtue of the fact that in them **the**

force of sympathy has no antipathy opposing it to overcome. It is only through these higher orders of soul substance that **the manifold variety of soul formations can unite and form a common soul world.** To the degree that **antipathy comes into play, the soul formation strives toward some other thing for the sake of its own life,** and in order to strengthen and enrich itself by means of the other. **Where antipathy is inactive, the other thing is received as revelation, as information.** This higher form of soul substance **plays a similar role in the soul space to that played by light in physical space. It causes one soul formation to suck in as it were, the being or essence of others for their own sakes; one could also say, to let itself be shone upon by them.** Only by drawing upon these higher regions are the soul beings awakened to the true soul life. Their dull life in the darkness opens outwards and begins to shine and ray out into soul space. The sluggish, dull weaving within itself that seeks to shut itself off through antipathy when the substances of the lower regions alone are present, becomes force and mobility that goes forth from within and pours itself outwards in streams. The Mobile Sensitivity of the second region is only effective when formations meet each other. Then, indeed, the one streams over into the other, but contact is here necessary. **In the higher regions there prevails a free out-ricing and out-pouring.** The essential nature of this region is quite rightly described as an “outricing,” because the sympathy that is developed acts in such a way that this expression, taken from the action of light, can be used as a symbol for it. Just as plants degenerate in a dark cellar, so do **the soul formations degenerate without the life-giving soul substances of the higher regions. Soul Light, Active Soul Force and the true Soul Life** in the narrower sense, belong to these regions and thence pour themselves into the soul beings.

Thus **one has to distinguish between three lower and three higher regions** of the soul world. These two are linked together by a fourth, so that **there results the following division of the soul world:**

1. Region of Burning Desire
2. Region of Mobile Sensitivity
3. Region of Wishes
4. ***Region of Liking and Disliking***
5. Region of Soul Light
6. Region of Active Soul Force
7. Region of Soul Life

Throughout the first three regions, the soul formations receive their qualities from the relative proportions of sympathy and antipathy. Throughout the fourth region sympathy weaves its web within the soul formations themselves. **Throughout the three highest, the power of sympathy becomes ever more free. Illumining and quickening, the soul substances of this region flow through the soul space, awakening what, if left to itself, would lose itself in its own separate existence.**

Though it should be superfluous, for the sake of clarity it must be emphasized that these seven divisions of the soul world do not represent regions separated one from another. **Just as in the physical world, solid, liquid and air or gaseous substances interpenetrate, so in the soul world do Burning Desire, Mobile Sensitivity and the forces of the World of Wishes. Just as in the physical world warmth penetrates bodies and light illumines them, so it is also the case in the soul world with Liking and Disliking, and with the Soul Light.** Something similar takes place with regard to the Active Soul Force and the true Soul Life.

I can't say whether I have yet distinguished all the various soul 'substances' and 'formations' as described here. However, the ASP environment is also difficult to explain in strictly physical terms. Light, for instance, will feel liquid, like a warm shower. Movement is also very fluid. Walking feels like skating. I already described the bungee cord sensation attached to simply viewing another or desiring to see them more closely. Knowledge will flash into mind, making such intuition feel more like seeing or hearing. I experienced whole libraries of crystal clear understanding flooding upon me in an instant –wisdom and knowledge far beyond a short lifetime's capacity to study-- only to disappear as abruptly into forgetfulness or confusion.

Soul in the Soul World after Death

The soul is the connecting link between the spirit of man and his body. Its forces of sympathy and antipathy, owing to their mutual relationship, bring about soul manifestations such as desire, sensitivity, wish, liking and aversion, and so forth. [These forces] are not only active between soul formation and soul formation, but they manifest themselves also in relation to the beings of the other worlds, the physical and the spiritual. While the soul lives in the body, it participates, so to speak, in all that takes place in the body. When the physical functions of the body proceed with regularity, pleasure and comfort arise in the soul. If these functions are disturbed, discomfort and pain arise. The soul, however, has its share in the activities of the spirit also. One thought fills it with joy, another with abhorrence; a correct judgment has the approval of the soul, a false one its disapproval. The stage of evolution of a man depends, in fact, on whether the inclinations of his soul move more in one direction or in another. **A man is the more perfect, the more his soul sympathizes with the manifestations of the spirit. He is the more imperfect the more the inclinations of his soul are satisfied by the functions of his body.**

The spirit is the [core being] of man, the body the [instrument] by which the spirit observes and learns to understand the physical world, and through which it acts in that world. **The soul is the [interface] between the two.** It liberates the sensation of sound from the physical impression that the vibrations of the air make on the ear. It experiences pleasure in this sound. All this it **communicates to the spirit, which**

thereby attains to the understanding of the physical world. A thought, which arises in the spirit, is transformed by the soul into the wish to realize it, and only through this can the thought become a deed with the help of the body as an instrument. Now man can fulfill his destiny only by **allowing his spirit to direct** the course of all his activity. **The soul can [rather] by its own power direct** its inclinations just as readily to the physical as to the spiritual. It sends, as it were, its feelers down into the physical as well as up into the spiritual. **By sinking [its feelers] into the physical world, the soul's own being becomes saturated and colored by the nature of the physical.** Since the spirit is able to act in the physical world only through the soul as intermediary, **[the spirit's directing is thereby diverted instead] towards the physical.** Its formations are drawn toward the physical by the forces of the soul. Observe, for example, the undeveloped human being. The inclinations of his soul cling to the functions of his body. He feels pleasure only in the impressions made by the physical world on his senses. His intellectual life also is thereby completely drawn down into this region. His thoughts serve only to satisfy his physical needs. **Since the spiritual self [transcends a physical incarnation], it is intended to receive its direction ever increasingly from the spiritual. Its knowledge should be determined by the spirit of eternal truth; its action by eternal goodness.**

This appears to me the dilemma, even more than ASP, presented by the kundalini experience of eastern yoga aspirants. In seeking 'no-self' as the ideal state of awareness, the disciple is actually led to step backwards in 'evolution of consciousness' terms. They seek to escape the spiritual subservience to Desire by abandoning self-image altogether. A universal consciousness is thereby perceived in place of self-consciousness (a we-ness after the ancient luciferic model), yet without the option of developing individual selfhood in a godly direction. The seeker experiences simply nothing in regard to his own personhood. Christianity, by contrast, embraces the individual self as the growing potential of conscience able to intuit eternal goodness, therefore rendering the externalized form, as Law, obsolete. This cannot happen, however, so long as self-image remains captivated by the cares and passions of this world. The Christ-ideal is indeed to lose one's self, in the interest of moving forward under impulse of the Christ-spirit to find one's true individual Self, a spiritualized Self-image free to love selflessly.

Death, regarded as a fact in the physical world, signifies a change in the functions of the body. **At death the body ceases to function as intermediary between the [physical world] and the spirit.** In its processes it shows itself henceforth entirely subject to the physical world and its laws, and it passes over into it in order to dissolve therein. Only [this physical dissolution] of the body can be observed after death by physical senses. What happens to the soul and spirit, however, escapes

[notice] because even during life, soul and spirit cannot be observed by the senses except insofar as they [are physically expressed]. After death this kind of expression is no longer possible. For this reason, **observation by means of the physical senses and the science based on it does not come under consideration in reference to the fate of the soul and spirit after death. Here a higher knowledge steps in that is based on [spiritual] observation of what takes place in the soul and spirit worlds.**

After the spirit has released itself from the body, it still continues to be united with the soul. Just as during physical life the body chained the [soul life] to the physical world, so now the soul chains the spirit to the soul world. It is not in this soul world, however, that the spirit's true, primordial being is to be found. The soul world is intended to serve merely as its connecting link with the scene of [the spirit's] actions, the physical world. In order to appear in a new incarnation with a more perfect form, the spirit must draw force and renewed strength from the spiritual world. **Through the soul it has become entangled in the physical world. It is bound to a soul being, which is saturated and colored by the nature of the physical, and through this has acquired a tendency in that direction.** After death the soul is no longer bound to the body, but only to the spirit. It lives now within soul surroundings. Only the forces of this soul world can, therefore, have an effect on it. At first the spirit also is bound to this life of the soul in the soul world. It is bound to it in the same way it is bound to the body during physical incarnation. When the body shall die is determined by the laws of the body. Speaking generally, it must be said that **it is not the soul and spirit that forsake the body, but they are set free by the body when its forces are no longer able to fulfill the purpose of the human soul organism.**

The relationship between soul and spirit is just the same. **The soul will set the spirit free to pass into the higher, spiritual world, when its forces are no longer able to fulfill the [spirit's enduring purpose for] the human soul organism.** The spirit is set free **the moment the soul has handed over to dissolution what it can experience only in the body, retaining only what can live on with the spirit.** This remainder, although experienced in the body, can nevertheless be **impressed on the spirit as fruit.** It connects the soul with the spirit in the purely spiritual world. In order to learn the fate of the soul after death, the process of dissolution must be observed. **[The soul] had the task of [facilitating] the spirit's direction toward the physical. The moment it has fulfilled this task, the soul [should turn its direction back] toward the spiritual.** In fact, the nature of its task would cause it henceforth to be only spiritually active when the body falls away from it, that is, when it can no longer be a connecting link [to the physical]. So it would be, had it not, owing to its life in the body, been influenced by the body and in its inclinations been attracted to it. Without this coloring received through the body, it would at once on being disembodied follow the laws of the spirit-soul world only and manifest no further inclination toward the sense world. **This would be the case if a man on dying lost completely all interest in the earthly world, if all desires and wishes attaching him to the existence [left behind] had been completely**

satisfied. To the extent that this is not the case, all that remains of his [physical] interest clings to the soul.

To avoid confusion we must carefully distinguish here between what chains man to the world in such a way that it can be adjusted in a subsequent incarnation, and **what chains him to one particular incarnation**, that is, to the one just passed. The first is made good by means of the law of destiny, karma. The second **can only be got rid of by the soul after death.**

After death there follows for the human spirit a time during which the soul is shaking off its inclinations toward physical existence in order to follow once more the laws of the spirit-soul world only and thus set the spirit free. The more the soul was bound to the physical, the longer, naturally, will this time last. It will be short for the man who has clung but little to physical life, and long for the one whose interests are completely bound up with it, who at death has many desires, wishes and impulses still living in the soul.

The easiest way to gain an idea of this condition in which the soul lives during the time immediately after death is afforded by the following consideration. Let us take a somewhat crass **example** — the pleasure of the bon vivant. **His pleasure is derived from food.** The pleasure is naturally **not bodily but belongs to the soul.** The **pleasure lives in the soul as does the desire for [more] pleasure.** To satisfy the desire, however, the corresponding bodily organs, the palate, etc., are necessary. **After death the soul has not immediately lost such a desire, but it no longer possesses the bodily organ that provides the means for satisfying it.** For another reason, but one that acts far more strongly in the same way, the human soul now experiences all the suffering of burning thirst that one would undergo in a waterless waste. **The soul thus suffers burning pain by being deprived of the pleasure** because it has laid aside the bodily organ through which it can experience that pleasure. It is the same with all that the soul yearns for and that can only be satisfied through the bodily organs. **This condition of burning privation lasts until the soul has learned to cease longing for what can only be satisfied through the body.** The time passed in this condition may be **called the region of desires**, although it has of course nothing to do with a “locality.”

I'm sure this is the intent of ascetic religious practices, hoping by way of self-denial to free the soul from dependence upon physical comforts. Ironically, asceticism—like involuntary poverty—can produce the opposite, being 'stuck' rather in a self-absorbed persistent grief over such material privations, else the longing for more physical suffering in order to perpetuate religious satisfaction. The latter is a sort of spiritual anorexia. Likewise, the anorexic is properly understood to be suffering the physical shadow of a spiritual imbalance.

When the soul enters the soul world after death it becomes subject [exclusively] to the laws of that world. The laws act on it and the manner in which the soul's inclinations towards the physical are destroyed depends upon [the action of those laws]. The way these laws act on the soul differs depending upon what kinds of soul substances and soul forces [dominate the soul] at the time. Each of these according to its kind will make its purifying, cleansing influence felt. The process that takes place here is such that **all antipathy in the soul is gradually overcome by the forces of sympathy.** This sympathy itself is brought to its highest pitch because, through this highest degree of sympathy [resonant] with the rest of the soul world, the soul will, as it were, merge into and become one with it. **Then will it be utterly emptied of self-seeking. It ceases to exist as a being inclined to physically sensible existence, and the spirit is set free by it. The soul, therefore, purifies itself [ascending] through all the regions of the soul world described above until, in the region of perfect sympathy, it becomes one with the general soul world.** That the spirit itself is in bondage until this last moment of the liberation of its soul is due to the fact that **through its [earth-directed] life the spirit has become most intimately related to the soul.** This relationship is much closer than the one with the body because the spirit is only indirectly bound to the body through the soul, whereas it is bound directly to the soul. **The soul [functions then as] the spirit's own life.** For this reason the spirit is not bound to the decaying body, although it is bound to the soul that is gradually freeing itself. **On account of the immediate bond between the spirit and the soul, the spirit can feel free of the soul only when the soul has itself become one with the general soul world.**

To the extent the soul world is the abode of man immediately after death, it is called the *region of desires*. The various religious systems that have embodied in their doctrines a knowledge of these conditions are acquainted with this region of desire under the name “purgatory,” “cleansing fire,” and the like.

The first soul purging is aimed at particular physical addictions, the most obvious, most universally excoriated (and easiest to overcome) kind of material ‘stuckness’.

The lowest region of the soul world is that of Burning Desire. Everything in the soul that has to do with the coarsest, lowest, most selfish desires of the physical life is purged from the soul after death by it, because through such desires it is exposed to the effects of the forces of this soul region. The unsatisfied desires that have remained over from physical life furnish the points of attack. **The sympathy of such souls only extends to what can nourish their selfish natures. It is greatly exceeded by the antipathy that floods everything else.** Now the desires aim at physical enjoyments that cannot be satisfied in the soul world. The craving is intensified to the highest degree by the impossibility of satisfaction. Owing to this impossibility, at the same time it is forced to die out gradually. The burning lusts gradually exhaust themselves and **the soul learns by experience that the only means of preventing the suffering that must come from such longings lies in extirpating them.** During physical life satisfaction is ever and again

attained. By this means the pain of the burning lusts is covered over by a kind of illusion. After death in the “cleansing fire” the pain comes into evidence quite unveiled. The corresponding experiences of privation are passed through. It is a dark, gloomy state indeed in which the soul thus finds itself. Of course, only those persons whose desires are directed during physical life to the coarsest things can fall into this condition. **Natures with few lusts go through it without noticing it because they have no affinity with it.** It must be stated that souls are the longer influenced by burning desire the more closely they have become related to that fire through their physical life. On that account there is more need for them to be purified in it. **Such purification should not be described as suffering in the sense of this expression as it is used in the sense world. The soul after death demands its [own] purification since an existing imperfection can only thus be purged away.**

The next purging targets dependency upon the plug-in drug, needing to escape the risks of genuine life experience and responsibility in perpetual consumption of earth-bound fun, entertainment.

In the *second region* of the soul world there are processes **in which sympathy and antipathy preserve an equal balance.** Insofar as a human soul is in that condition after death it will be influenced by what takes place in this region for a time. **The losing of oneself in the external glitter of life, the joy in the swiftly succeeding impressions of the senses,** bring about this condition. People live in it to the extent it is brought about by the soul inclinations just indicated. They allow themselves to be **influenced by each worthless trifle of everyday life,** but since their sympathy is attached to no one thing in particular, the influences pass quickly. **Everything that does not belong to this region of empty nothings is repellent to such persons.** When the soul experiences this condition after death without the presence of the physical objects that are necessary for its satisfaction, the condition must ultimately die out. Naturally, the privation that precedes its complete extinction in the soul is full of suffering. **This state of suffering is the school for the destruction of the illusion a man is wrapped up in during physical life.**

ASP sojourners who overcome the initial terror, encounter this challenge as pre-occupation with OBE adventuring for its own sake. More on this later.

Third round purges the soul of a false self-image defined by the opiate of ‘having to have’, the shop-a-holic.

Then a *third region* of the soul world is to be considered in which the **phenomena of sympathy, of the wish nature, predominate.** Souls experience the effects of these phenomena from everything that preserves an atmosphere of wishes after death. These **wishes also gradually die out because of the impossibility of satisfying them.**

Even the holiest of saints get bogged in the following trial. As already noted, the classic disciplines involving ascetic lifestyle, specific fasts and penitence will yet fail to prepare the soul for the final four stages of purification. Ironically, the soul is capable of attaching self-fulfillment and preference in its fervency to the sufferings of religious pilgrimage, even flagellation. One learns to like what the less devoted most dislike ... pain. It is an insidiously materialistic pride, incapable of realizing such distinction apart from physical bodyhood. Poor Baalam's ass. Saul, Saul –Why do you persecute me?

The **region of Liking and Disliking** in the soul world that has been described above as the *fourth region* imposes special trials on the soul. As long as the soul dwells in the body it shares all that concerns the body. **The inner surge of liking and disliking is bound up with the body. The body causes the soul's feeling of well-being and comfort, dislike and discomfort. During his physical life man feels that his body is himself.** What is called the feeling of self is based upon this fact, and the more people are inclined to be sensuous, the more does their feeling of self take on this character. **After death the body, the object of the feeling of self, is lacking. On this account the soul, which still retains such a feeling, has the sensation of being emptied out as it were. A feeling as if it had lost itself overcomes the soul. This continues until it has been recognized that the true human being does not lie in the physical. The impressions made by this fourth region on the soul accordingly destroy the illusion of the bodily self.** The soul learns to feel this corporeality no longer as an essential reality. It is cured and purified of its attachment to the body. In this way it has conquered what previously chained it strongly to the physical world, and it can now unfold fully the forces of sympathy that flow outwards. **It has, so to speak, broken free from itself and is ready to pour itself into the common soul world with full sympathy.**

This is where Christian baptism is so liberating, identifying with Christ in both His death and resurrection. One thereby dies to the shadow self-image in order to be alive finally as the actual, substantial Self. Freedom is then evident as the soul capable of self-sacrificing love for another.

Then there is the radical jihadist, ready and willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for a warped sense of ideological purity ... yet even he does so in the hope ultimately of a sensuous reward in heaven, such as 73 virgins, give or take.

It should not pass unnoted that the **experiences of this region are suffered to an especial degree by suicides.** Such a one leaves his physical body in an artificial way, although all the feelings connected with it remain unchanged. **In the case of**

natural death, the decay of the body is accompanied by a partial dying out of the feelings of attachment to it. [*Therefore, the process of dying of advanced age or disease is truly a mercy.*] In the case of suicides there are, in addition to the torment caused by the feeling of having been suddenly emptied out, the unsatisfied desires and wishes because of which they have deprived themselves of their bodies. [*Death by accident or violence may result in the same, wherefrom the tales of earthly hauntings.*]

Then a cure for the environmentalist in us all ...especially as it is elevated to the place of religion in our lives, a sort of modern druidic exaltation of animals with often an equal denigration of mankind. Likewise the self absorbed in gardening or decor. Feng Shui anyone? The elitist soul preoccupied with health and hygiene, order and cleanliness, etiquette, proper speech or behavior and fashionable appearance; he or she may suffer here –the “Martha” syndrome –in absence of any preferred earthbound environment, whether physical, cultural or intellectual. Consider educational dogma or correct theology and church legalism, for instance. What defines your comfort zone? Even this, they know better than you, or so they tell you. Read The Great Divorce, by CS Lewis.

The **fifth stage** of the soul world is that of **Soul Light**. In it sympathy with others has already reached a high degree of importance. Souls are connected with this stage insofar as they did not lose themselves in the satisfaction of lower necessities during their physical lives, [yet **sustained**] **joy and pleasure in their surroundings. Over-enthusiasm for nature**, for example, in that it has borne **something of a sensuous character**, undergoes purifying here. It is necessary, however, to distinguish clearly this kind of love of nature from the higher living in nature that is of the spiritual kind that seeks for the spirit revealing itself in the things and events of nature. This kind of feeling for nature is one of the things that develop the spirit itself and establishes something permanent in it! One must distinguish, however, between such a feeling for nature, and a pleasure in nature that is based on the senses. In regard to this, the soul requires purification just as well as in regard to other inclinations based on mere physical existence. Many people see **a kind of ideal in the arrangements of civilization that serve sensuous well-being**, and in **a system of education that, above all, brings about sensuous comfort**. One cannot say that they seek to further only their selfish impulses. Their souls are, nevertheless, directed toward the physical world and must be cured of this by the force of sympathy that rules in the fifth region of the soul world and lacks these external means of gratification. Here the soul gradually recognizes that this sympathy must take other directions. These are found in the outpouring of the soul into the soul region, which is brought about by sympathy with the soul surroundings. Those souls also are purified here that mainly **seek an enhancement of their sensuous welfare from their religious observances**,

whether it be that their longing goes out to an earthly or to a heavenly paradise. **They, indeed, find this paradise in the “soul-land,” but only for the purpose of seeing through its worthlessness.** These are, of course, merely a few detached examples of purifications that take place in this fifth region. They could be multiplied indefinitely.

Then comes the adventure-seeking soul, the cultured vagabond, dare-devil and social super hero. These are the movers and shakers of society, church and family –obsessively so. Many well-intentioned politicians and pastors will stumble here –that self-denying public servant, and the tireless TV evangelist who is twice divorced and a stranger to his own children.

By means of the *sixth region*, that of **Active Soul Force**, the purification of the part of **the soul that thirsts for action** takes place in souls whose activity does not bear an egotistical character but spring, nevertheless, from the sensuous satisfaction that [activity] affords them. Viewed superficially, natures that develop such a *desire for action* convey the impression of being idealists; they show themselves to be persons capable of self-sacrifice. In a deeper sense, however, **the chief thing with them is the enhancement of a sensuous feeling of pleasure. Many artistic natures and those who give themselves up to scientific activity** because it pleases them belong to this class. These people are bound to the physical world by the belief that art and science exist for the sake of such pleasure.

And finally, the incurable martyr. These are inarguably heroes of cultural influence and progress, and likely nobody else could have filled their shoes. But even superheroes must pass the mantle sometime.

The *seventh region*, that of the real **Soul Life**, frees man from his last inclinations to the sensory physical world. Each preceding region takes up from the soul whatever has affinity with it. **The part of the soul still enveloping the spirit is the belief that its activity should be entirely devoted to the physical world.** There are **highly gifted individuals** whose thoughts, however, are occupied with scarcely anything but the occurrences of the physical world. **This belief can be called materialistic. It must be destroyed,** and this is done in the seventh region. There the souls see that in true reality there exists no objects for materialistic thinking. Like ice in the sun, this belief of the soul melts away. The soul being is now absorbed into its own world. Now free of all fetters the spirit rises to the regions where it lives entirely in surroundings of its own nature. **The soul had completed its previous earthly task, and after death any traces of this task that remained fettering the spirit have dissolved. By overcoming the last trace of the earthly, the soul is itself given back to its own element.**

One sees from this description that the experiences in the soul world, and also **the conditions of soul life after death, take on an ever less repellent character the more a man has stripped off those elements adhering to him from his earthly union with the physical corporeality** and that were directly related to his body. The soul will belong for a longer or shorter time to one or another region according to the conditions created during its physical life. **Wherever the soul feels affinity, there it remains until the affinity is extinguished. Where no relation exists, it goes on its way without feeling the possible effects.**

It was intended that only the fundamental characteristics of the soul world and the outstanding features of the life of the soul in this world should be described here. This applies also to the following descriptions of the spiritland. It would exceed the prescribed limits of this book were further descriptions of the characteristics of these higher worlds attempted. The spatial relationships and the time lapses — terms that can only be used by way of comparison because the conditions are quite different there from those obtaining in the physical world — can only be discussed intelligibly when one is prepared to deal with them adequately and in full detail. References of importance in this connection will be found in my *Occult Science, an Outline*.

2. The Spiritland

Before the spirit can be observed on its further pilgrimage, the region it enters must first be examined. It is **the world of the spirit**. This world **is so unlike the physical that all that is said about it will appear fantastic to anyone who is only willing to trust his physical senses**. What has already been said in regard to the world of the soul — that is, that **we have to use analogies to describe it** — also holds good here to a still higher degree. Our language, which for the most part serves only for the realities of the senses, is not richly blessed with expressions applicable directly to the spiritland. It is, therefore, especially necessary to ask the reader to understand much that is said as an indication only because everything that is described here is so unlike the physical world that only in this way can it be depicted. The author is ever conscious of how little this account can really resemble the experiences of this region owing to the imperfection of our language, calculated as it is to be our medium of expression for the physical world.

It must above all things be emphasized that **this world is woven out of the substance of which human thought consists**. The word “substance,” too is here used in a far from strict or accurate sense. **Thought, however, as it lives in man, is only a shadow picture, a phantom of its true nature**. Just as the shadow of an object on the wall is related to the real object that throws this shadow, so is the thought that makes its appearance through a human brain related to the being in the spiritland that corresponds to this thought. Now, **when his spiritual sense is awakened, man really perceives this thought being, just as the eye of the senses perceives a table or a chair**. He goes about in a region of thought beings. The corporeal eye perceives the lion, and the thinking directed to the sensibly

perceptible thinks merely the thought, “lion” as a shadow, a shadowy picture. **The spiritual eye sees in spiritland the thought “lion” as really and actually as the corporeal eye sees the physical lion.** Here we may again refer to the analogy already used regarding the land of the soul. Just as the surroundings of a man born blind operated upon appear suddenly with the new qualities of color and light, so do the surroundings of the person who learns to use his spiritual eye appear as **a new world, the world of living thoughts or spirit beings.** In this world there are to be seen, first, **the spiritual archetypes of all things and beings that are present in the physical and soul worlds.** Imagine a painter's picture existing in his mind before it is painted. This gives an analogy to what is meant by the expression *archetype*. It does not concern us here that the painter has perhaps not had such an archetype in his mind before he paints and that it only gradually develops and becomes complete during the execution of the picture. **In the real world of spirit there exist such archetypes for all things, and the physical things and beings are copies of these archetypes.** It is quite understandable when anyone who only trusts his outer senses denies this archetypal world and holds that archetypes are merely abstractions gained by an intellectual comparison of sense objects. Such a person simply cannot see in this higher world. He knows the thought world only in its shadowy abstraction. He does not know that the person with spiritual vision is as familiar with spirit beings as he himself is with his dog or his cat, and that **the archetypal world has a far more intense reality than the world of the physical senses.**

True, the first look into this spiritland is still more bewildering than the first glimpse into the soul world because **the archetypes in their true form are very unlike their sensory reflections.** They are, however, **just as unlike their shadows, the abstract thoughts.** In the spiritual world **all is in perpetual, mobile activity in the process of ceaseless creating.** A state of rest, a remaining in one place such as we find in the physical world, does not exist here **because the archetypes are creative beings.** * (See Addendum 9.) They are **the master builders of all that comes into being** in the physical and soul worlds. **Their forms change rapidly and in each archetype lies the possibility of assuming myriads of specialized forms.** They let the different shapes well up out of them, as it were, and no sooner is one produced than the archetype sets about pouring forth the next one from itself. Moreover, the archetypes stand in more or less intimate relationships to each other. They do not work singly. The one requires the help of the other in its creating **Often innumerable archetypes work together in order that this or that being in the soul or physical world may arise.**

I am reminded here of imaginary works such as by GK Chesterton, The Man Called Thursday, also Charles Williams in The Greater Trumps. These authors were clearly attempting to picture the archetypal realities.

Besides what is to be perceived by “spiritual sight” in this spiritland, there is something else experienced that is to be regarded as “spiritual hearing.” As soon as

the clairvoyant rises out of the soul world into the spirit world, the archetypes that are perceptible become “sounding” as well. This sounding, this emission of a tone, is a purely spiritual process. It must be conceived without any accompanying thought of a physical sound. The observer **feels as if he were in an ocean of tones, and in these tones, in this spiritual chiming, the beings of the spirit world express themselves.** The primordial laws of their existence, **their mutual relationships and affinities, express themselves in the intermingling of these sounds, in their harmonies, melodies and rhythms.** What the intellect perceives in the physical world as law, as idea, reveals itself to the spiritual ear as spiritual music. Hence, **the Pythagoreans called this perception of the spiritual world the “music of the spheres.”** To the possessor of a spiritual ear this music of the spheres is **not something merely figurative or allegorical, but a spiritual reality well-known** to him. If we wish to gain a conception of this spiritual music, however, we must lay aside all ideas of the music of the senses as perceived by the material ear because in spiritual music we are concerned with a spiritual perception, that is, with **perception of a kind that must remain silent to the ear of the senses.**

In the following descriptions of spiritland **reference to this spiritual music will be omitted for the sake of simplicity.** We have only to realize that **everything described as picture, as shining with light, is at the same time sounding.** Each color, each perception of light represents a spiritual tone, and **every combination of colors corresponds with a harmony, a melody.** Thus we must hold clearly in mind that even where the sounding prevails, perception by means of the spiritual eye by no means ceases. The sounding is merely added to the shining. Therefore, where archetypes are spoken of in the following pages, the primal tones are to be thought of as also present. **Other perceptions make their appearance as well, which by way of comparison may be termed spiritual *tasting* and the like,** but it is not proposed to go into these processes here since we are concerned with awakening a conception of spiritland through some few isolated modes of perception selected out of the whole.

Now **it is necessary at the outset to distinguish the different species of archetypes** from each other. In spiritland **also it is necessary to distinguish between a number of degrees or regions** in order to find one's way among them. Here also, as in the soul world, the different regions are not to be thought of as laid one above the other like strata, but as **mutually interpenetrating and permeating each other.**

The First Region. This region **contains the archetypes of the physical world insofar as it is devoid of life.** The archetypes of the *minerals and plant [forms]* are to be found here, but the archetypes of plants are found only to the extent that they are purely physical, that is, insofar as **any life content they may possess is disregarded.** In the same way we find here the *physical forms of the animals and of men.* This by no means exhausts all that is to be found in this region, but merely illustrates it by the most obvious examples. This region forms **the basic structure**

of spiritland. It can be **likened to the solid land masses of the physical earth.** It forms the continental masses of spiritland. Its relationship with the physical corporeal world can only be described by means of an illustration. Some idea of it can be gained in the following way. Picture a limited space filled with physical bodies of the most varied kind. Then think these bodies away and conceive in their stead hollow spaces having their forms. The intervening spaces that were previously empty must be thought of as filled with the most varied forms having manifold relationships with the physical bodies spoken of above. In appearance this is somewhat like the lowest region of the archetypal world. In it **the things and beings that become embodied in the physical world are present as hollow spaces, and in the intervening spaces the mobile activity of the archetypes and of the spiritual music takes place.** During their formation into physical forms the hollow spaces become, as it were, filled with physical matter. If anyone were to look into space with both physical and spiritual eyes, he would see the physical bodies and between them the mobile activity of the creative archetypes.

The Second Region. This region of spiritland **contains the archetypes of life,** but this life forms here a perfect unity. It **streams through the world of spirit as a fluid element, like blood, pulsating through everything.** It may be **likened to the sea and the water systems of the physical earth.** Its distribution, however, is more like the distribution of the blood in the animal body than that of the seas and rivers. One could describe this second stage of the spiritland as **flowing life composed of thought substance.** In this element are the creative primal forces producing everything that appears in physical reality as living beings. **Here it becomes evident that all life is a unity, that the life in man is related to the life of all his fellow creatures.**

Before I was born, I was a twinkle in my father's eye.

The Third Region. The **archetypes of all soul formations** must be designated as the third region of the spiritland. Here we find ourselves in a much finer and rarer element than in the first two regions. To use a comparison it can be called the **air or atmosphere of spiritland.** Everything that goes on in the souls of both the other worlds — the physical and the soul worlds — has here its spiritual counterpart. **Here all feelings, sensations, instincts and passions are again present, but spiritually present. The atmospheric events in this aerial region correspond to the sorrows and joys of the creatures in the other worlds. The longing of the human soul appears here as a gentle zephyr; an outbreak of passion is like a stormy blast.** He who can visualize what is here under consideration pierces deep into the sighing of every creature if he directs his attention to the matter. We can, for example, speak here of a loud storm with flashing lightning and rolling thunder. If we investigate the matter further, we find that the **passions of a battle waged on earth are expressed in spiritland in a storm of spirit beings.**

JRR Tolkien conceived a mountain storm as accompanying --perhaps caused by-- the heedless gathering of giants to play Dodge Ball with boulders.

The Fourth Region. The archetypes of the fourth region are not immediately related to the other worlds. They are in certain respects *beings who govern the archetypes of the three lower regions and mediate their working together*. They are accordingly *occupied with the ordering and grouping of these subordinate archetypes*. Therefore, a more comprehensive activity proceeds from this region than from the lower ones.

The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Regions. These regions differ essentially from the preceding ones because the beings to be found in them supply the archetypes of the lower regions with the impulses to their activity. In them we find *the creative forces of the archetypes themselves*. Whoever is able to rise to these regions makes acquaintance with *purposes that underlie our world*.^{*} Like living germ-points, the archetypes still lie here ready to assume the most manifold forms of thought beings. If these germ-points are projected into the lower regions, they well up, as it were, and manifest themselves in the most varied shapes. *The ideas through which the human spirit manifests itself creatively in the physical world are the reflection, the shadow, of these germinal thought beings of the higher spiritual world*. The observer with the spiritual ear who rises from the lower regions of spiritland to these higher ranges becomes aware that *sounds and tones are transformed into a spiritual language*. He begins to *perceive the Spiritual Word* through which the things and beings no longer make known to him their nature in music alone, but now express it in words. *They utter what can be called in spiritual science their eternal names*. (See Addendum 11.)

^{*} That such a term as “purposes” can also only be used in the sense of a “simile” is obviously self-explanatory from what was said above about the difficulties of expressing in language such thoughts as these. The last thing intended is to warm over the old “doctrine of purpose.” See also Addendum 10.

We must visualize these thought germ-beings as possessing a composite nature. Only the germ-sheath is taken out of the element of the thought world, and this surrounds the true life kernel. With it we have reached the confines of the three worlds because the kernel has its origin in still higher worlds. **When man was described** in the preceding pages according to **his [higher archetypal] components were called *life spirit and spirit man***. There are **similar life kernels for other beings in the cosmos**. They originate in higher worlds and are placed in the three that have been described in order to accomplish their tasks in them.

The human spirit will now be followed on its further pilgrimage through spiritland between two embodiments or incarnations. While doing this, the conditions and distinguishing characteristics of this “land” will once more come clearly into view.

3. The Spirit in Spiritland after Death

When the human spirit has passed through the worlds of souls on its way between two incarnations, it enters the land of spirits to remain there until it is ripe for a new bodily existence. One can only understand the meaning of this sojourn in spiritland when one is able to interpret in the right way the aim and end of the pilgrimage of man through his incarnation. While man is incarnated in the physical body he works and creates in the physical world as a spiritual being. He imprints on the physical forms, on corporeal materials and forces what his spirit thinks out and develops. **As a messenger [from] the spiritual world [a man] has, therefore, to embody the spirit in the corporeal world.** Only by being embodied, incarnated, can man work in the world of bodies. He must take on the physical body as his tool **so that through the body he can act on other bodies and they on him.** What acts through this physical corporeality of man is the spirit. **From this spirit flow the purposes, the direction [this spirit's] work is to take in the physical world.**

Now **as long as the spirit works in the physical body**, it cannot as spirit live in its true form. It can, as it were, only shine through the veil of physical existence because as a matter of fact, the thought life of man really belongs to the spiritual world. As it appears in physical existence **its true form is veiled.** It can also be said that **the thought life of the physical man is a shadow, a reflection of the true, spiritual being to whom it belongs.** Thus, during physical life, the spirit working through the physical body interacts with the earthly corporeal world. Although one of the tasks of the human spirit, as long as it proceeds from incarnation to incarnation, is to work upon the physical corporeal world, it could by no means fulfill this task in a proper manner if it lived merely in embodied existence. The purposes and goals of the earthly task are just as little developed and determined within the earthly incarnation, as the plan of a house comes into existence on the site where the laborers work. Just as this plan is worked out in the office of the architect, so are the aims and purposes of earthly creative activities worked out and developed in the land of spirits. The spirit of man has to live again and again in this land between two incarnations in order to be able, equipped with what he takes with him on his departure, to approach the work in the physical life. **Just as the architect, without working with brick and mortar, works out the plan of the house in his drafting room in accordance with architectural and other laws, so too does the architect of human creation, the spirit or higher self, develop its capacities and aims in spiritland in accordance with the laws of that land, in order to bring them over into the earthly world.** Only [as] the human spirit sojourns again and again in its own region, will it also be able by means of the physical corporeal instruments to bring the spirit into the earthly world.

On the physical scene of action man learns to know the qualities and forces of the physical world. **During his creative [physical] activity he gathers experiences regarding the demands [of] the physical world** upon anyone wishing to work on it. He learns to know there, as it were, the qualities of the matter in which he wishes to embody his thoughts and ideas. The thoughts and ideas themselves he cannot

extract from matter. **Thus the physical world is both the scene of his creating and of his learning. [Then] in the spiritland, what has been [physically] learned is transformed into living faculties of the spirit.** One can carry the above comparison farther in order to make the matter clearer. The architect designs a house. His plans are carried out. In doing this he gains the most varied experiences. All of these experiences enhance his capacities. When he works out his next design, all these experiences flow into it, and this next design, when compared to the first, is seen to be enriched with all that was learned through the first.

It is the same with the successive human lives. In the intervals **between incarnations**, the spirit lives in its own sphere. It can give itself up entirely to the requirements of the spirit life. Freed from the physical body, **it develops itself in every direction and works into this development the fruits of its experiences in former earthly careers.** Thus its attention is always directed to the scene of its earthly tasks. Thus it works continually at following the earth insofar as that is its field of action, through its necessary development. It works upon itself in order to be able in each incarnation to carry out its service during that life in accordance with the condition of the earth at that time. This is, of course, only a general outline of successive human lives. Reality will never quite correspond with it, but only to a certain degree. **Circumstances may decree that a man's subsequent life be much less perfect than a previous one, but taken as a whole such irregularities equalize themselves in the succession of lives within definite limits.**

The development of the spirit in spiritland takes place in consequence of man's entering completely into the [community] life of the various regions of this land. **His own life dissolves, as it were, into these regions successively and he takes on, [during that sojourn, characteristics of the archetypal beings there].** Through this they penetrate his being with theirs in order that they [also] may be able to work [in his earthly life], strengthened by their life.

In the *first region* of spiritland man is **surrounded by the spiritual archetypes of earthly [forms].** During life on earth he learns to know only the shadows of these archetypes that he grasps in his thoughts. **What is merely thought on earth is in this region experienced, lived. [Physical man] moves among thought [shadows], but these thoughts are real beings. What he has perceived with his senses during life on earth acts on him now in its [true, living] thought form.** The thought, however, does not appear as the shadow hiding itself behind the things. It is, on the contrary, **the life-filled reality producing the things [of earth].** Man is, as it were, in the thought workshop in which earthly things are formed and fashioned, because in the land of spirit all is vital activity and mobility. Here the thought world is at work as a world of living beings, creative and constructive. We see how what we have experienced during the earthly existence is constructed. **Just as in the physical body we experience the things of the senses as reality, so now, as spirit, we experience the spiritual, constructive forces as real.**

Among the thought beings to be found in spiritland is also the thought of our own physical corporeality. We feel removed from the latter. We feel only the spiritual being as belonging to ourselves, and when, then its relation **we perceive the discarded body as if in memory, no longer as physical but as thought being** to the external world becomes a matter of direct perception. We learn to look at it as something belonging to the external world, as a member of this external world. **We consequently no longer distinguish our own corporeality from the rest of the external world as something more closely related to ourselves. We feel the unity in the whole external world including our own bodily incarnations.** Our own embodiments dissolve here into a unity with the rest of the world. Thus **man here looks upon the archetypes of the physical corporeal reality as a unity to which he has belonged** himself. He learns, therefore, gradually to know his relationship, his unity with the surrounding world by observation. He learns to say to it, "What is here spread out around thee, thou wert that." This is one of the fundamental thoughts of ancient Indian Vedanta wisdom. **The sage acquires, even during his earthly life, what others experience after death, namely, the ability to grasp the thought that he himself is related to all things — the thought, "Thou art that."** In earthly life this is an ideal to which the thought life can be devoted. **In the land of the spirit it is an immediate fact,** one that grows ever clearer to us through spiritual experience, and man himself comes to know ever more clearly in this land that in his own inner being he belongs to the spirit world. **He perceives [non-corporeal self] to be a spirit among spirits, a member of the primordial spirits,** feeling within himself the word of the primordial spirit, "I am the Primal Spirit." The wisdom of the Vedanta says, "I am Brahman," that is, I belong as a member to the primordial being in whom all beings have their origin. **We see that what is grasped during earthly life as a shadowy thought towards which all wisdom strives is in spiritland an immediate experience. Indeed it is only *thought* during earth life because it is a *fact* in spiritual existence.**

Thus man during his spiritual existence **sees as if from outside from a high watch tower the relationships and facts in the midst of which he [stood] during his earthly life.** During his life in the lowest region of spiritland, he lives in regard to **the earthly relationships immediately connected with physical corporeal reality.** On earth man is born into **a family, a folk;** he lives in a certain country. His **earthly existence is determined by all these relationships.** He finds this or that friend because relationships within the physical world bring it about. He carries on this or that business. All this decides the conditions of his earthly life. All this presents itself to him during his life in the first region of spiritland as living thought being. **He lives it all through again in a certain way, but he lives it through from the active spiritual side.** The family love he has exercised, the friendship he has produced, become alive and quick from within, and his capacities in this direction are enhanced. **That element in the spirit of man that acts as the force of love of family and friend is strengthened. He later enters on his earthly existence again as a more perfect man in these respects.** It is to a certain extent the everyday relationships of earth life that ripen as the fruit of this lowest region of spiritland. That element in man, which in its interests is wholly absorbed by these

everyday relationships, will feel itself in affinity with this region for the greater part of its life between two incarnations. **We find again in the spiritual world the people with whom we have lived in the physical world.** Just as everything loosens and falls away from the soul that was peculiarly its own through the physical body, so also does **the bond that in physical life linked soul with soul loosen itself from those conditions that have meaning and effectiveness only in the physical world.** Yet all that soul was to soul in physical life is carried over **beyond death into the spiritual world.** It is natural that words coined for physical conditions can only reproduce inaccurately what takes place in the spiritual world. If this is taken into account, it must be described as quite correct when it is said that **those souls that belong together in physical life find each other again in order to continue in a corresponding manner their joint lives in the spiritual world.**

In the *second region* the **common life of the earth world** flows as thought being, as a **fluid element**, so to speak, of spiritland. As long as one observes the world during physical embodiment, life appears to be confined within separate living beings. In spiritland it is liberated from them and, like life-blood, flows as it were through the whole land. It exists there as the living unity that is present in all things. Of this also only a reflection appears to man during earthly life, and this reflection expresses itself in every form of reverence that he pays to the whole, to the unity and harmony of the universe. The religious life of man is derived from this reflection. He becomes aware of how far the all-embracing meaning of existence does not lie in what is transitory and separate. He regards the transitory as a similitude, a likeness of an eternal, harmonious unity. He looks up to this unity in a mood of reverence and worship. He performs before it religious rites and ceremonies. In spiritland, not the reflection but the real form appears as living thought being. Here man can [actually] join himself to the unity that he has revered on earth. The fruits of religious life and all connected with it make their appearance in this region. Man now learns through spiritual experience to recognize that his individual destiny is not to be separated from the community to which he belongs. The capacity to know oneself as a member of a whole develops here. The religious feelings, all that has already during life striven after a pure and noble morality, will draw strength out of this region during a great part of the spiritual life between incarnations, and a man will reincarnate with enhanced capacities in this direction.

And to know myself as a member of the whole body of Christ –this is the higher reality that I am beginning to grasp as I learn to sense and access the life-blood of that spiritual body for constant nourishment and healing of my own physical life as well. The power feels indeed like fluid life and warmth washing down my being, and at times literally what Jesus described as fountains of living water filling up and flowing outward.

While in the first region we are in company of those souls with whom we have been linked by the closest ties of the physical world during the preceding physical life. In the second region we enter the domain of all those things with whom we felt united in a wider sense, that is, through a common reverence, through a common religious confession, and so on. It must be emphasized that the spiritual experiences of the preceding regions continue to persist through the subsequent ones. Thus man is not all torn away from the ties knitted by family, friendship, and so on, when he enters upon the life of the second and following regions. Moreover, the regions of spiritland do not lie like sections one beside the other. They interpenetrate each other, and man experiences himself in a new region not because he has externally entered upon it in any form whatever, but because **he has attained in himself the inner capacities for now perceiving what he previously lived within, but without perceiving it.**

In other words, during earth life, a person lives and perceives from behind the facade of an earth-bound self-image. So, even though he possesses spiritual eyes, the noise of physical distractions may mask the truth, not allowing him to perceive all there is to see by such eyes ... until the physical veil is lifted after death. Then all those irritating spiritual attachments, relationships that were obvious to every other watching spirit, are finally revealed now to his own perception and thereby judged. This, I believe is one significance of ASP, the insight which a Vedic disciple seeks and may never achieve in one lifetime.

The **third region** of spiritland contains the **archetypes of the soul world**. All that lives in this world is here present as living thought being. We find in it the archetypes of desires, wishes and feelings, but **here in the spirit world nothing self-seeking clings to the soul**. Just as all life forms a unity in the second region, so in this third region **all longings, wishes, all likes and dislikes form a unity**. The desire and wish of others are not separable from my desire and wish. The **sensations and feelings of all beings are a common world, enclosing and surrounding everything else, just as the physical atmosphere surrounds the earth**. This region is, as it were, the atmosphere or air of spiritland. **All that a person has carried out in his life on earth in the service of the [larger] community, in selfless devotion to his fellowmen, will bear fruit here** because through this service, through this self-giving, he has lived in a reflection of the third region of spiritland. The great benefactors of the human race, the self-sacrificing natures, those who render great services to communities, have gained their ability to render them in this region after having acquired for themselves the readiness for a special relation to it during their previous earthly careers.

It is evident that the three regions of spiritland just described stand in a certain relation to the worlds below them, to the physical and soul worlds, because they contain the archetypes, the living thought beings, that take up corporeal or soul existence in those worlds. Only the **fourth region** is the pure spiritland, but even

this region is not quite that in the fullest sense of the word. It differs from the three lower regions owing to the fact that in them we meet with the **archetypes of [culture,] those physical and soul relations that [incarnated] man finds [already] existing in the physical and soul worlds** before he himself begins to participate in them. The circumstances of everyday life link themselves with the **things and beings that man finds already present in the world**. The transitory things of this world direct his gaze to their eternal primal foundation, and his **fellow creatures** also, to whom he selflessly devotes himself, do not owe their presence to him. It is, however, through him that there are in the world all the **creations of the arts, sciences, engineering, states and governments** — in short, all that he has embodied in the world as original creations of his spirit. Without his activity these could not manifest themselves in the physical world. The archetypes of these **purely human creations** are in the fourth region of the spiritland. **All that we [as a community] develop during earthly life in the way of scientific discoveries, of artistic ideas and forms, of technical conceptions, bears fruit in this fourth region. It is out of this region therefore that artists, scientists and inventors draw their impulses and enhance their genius during their stay in spiritland in order during another incarnation to be able to assist in fuller measure the further evolution of human culture.** But we must not imagine that this fourth region of spiritland possesses importance only for specially prominent human beings. **It has great importance for all men.** All that occupies us in our physical life outside the sphere of everyday living, wishing and willing has its source in this region. If we did not pass through it in the period between death and a new birth, we would in our subsequent life have no **interests leading out beyond the narrow circle of our personal life-conduct to what is common to all humanity.**

It has already been said above that even this region cannot be called pure spiritland in the full sense of the word. This is the case because the stage at which men have left civilization on earth continues to influence their spiritual existence. **They can enjoy in spiritland only the fruits of what it was possible for them to carry out in accordance with their talents and the stage of development of the folk, state and nation into which they were born.**

This archetypal being has been called the Spirit of the Age, the world stage onto which each human spirit is incarnated twice, once as male and again as female. These folk spirits will themselves be subject to eternal scrutiny for how they served human souls, justly or unjustly, as Christ finally judges the “nations” of Earth’s ages.

In the still higher regions of spiritland the human spirit is now freed from every earthly fetter. It rises to the pure spiritland in which it **experiences the intentions, the aims that the spirit set itself to accomplish by means of the earthly life.** All that has been already realized in the earthly world brings into existence only a more or less weak copy of the highest intentions and aims. Each crystal, each tree, each animal, and all that is being realized in the domain of human creation — all this gives only copies of what the spirit intends, and man during his incarnations can

only link himself with these **imperfect copies of the perfect intentions and aims**. Thus during one of his incarnations **he himself can only be an image of what, in the kingdom of the spirit, he is intended to be**. What he really is as spirit in spiritland comes, therefore, into view only when he rises to the *fifth region* of spiritland in the interval between two incarnations. What he is here is really he himself — the being who receives an external existence in the numerous and varied incarnations. **In this region the true self of man can freely live and expand in all directions**, and this self is thus the being who appears ever anew in each incarnation as the one. This self brings with it the faculties that have developed in the lower regions of the spiritland. It consequently **carries the fruits of former lives over into those following**. It is the bearer of the results of former incarnations.

When the self lives in the fifth region of the spiritland, it is in **the kingdom of intentions and purposes**. Just as the architect learns from the imperfections that have come to light in his work, and just as he brings into his new designs only what he was able to change from imperfections to perfections, so does the self in the fifth region discard from the results of its former lives whatever is bound up with the imperfections of the lower worlds, and with these results it impregnates the purposes of the spiritland — purposes with which it now lives. It is clear that the force that can be drawn from this region will depend upon how much the self during its incarnation has acquired in the form of results fit to be taken up into the world of purposes. **The self that has sought to realize the purposes of the spirit during earthly life through an active thought life, or through wise love expressed in deeds, will establish a strong claim upon this region**. The self that has expended its efforts entirely on the events of everyday life, that has lived only in the transitory, has sown no seeds that can be fruitful in the purposes of the external world order. Only the small portion of its activities that extended beyond the interests of everyday life can unfold as fruit in these higher regions of the spiritland. It must not be supposed that what comes into consideration here is chiefly earthly fame or anything akin to it. No, the important thing to realize here is that in **the narrowest walks of life even the least event has its significance in the eternal progressive course of existence**.

We must make ourselves familiar with the thought that **in this region our judgments must be different from those in the physical life**. For instance, **if a man has acquired little that is related to this fifth region, the craving arises in him to imprint an impulse upon himself for the following life** that will cause that life to run its course in such a way that **in its destiny (karma) the corresponding effect of that deficiency will come to light**. Experiences, which in the following earth life appear as a painful destiny, seen from that life — and perhaps deeply bewailed as such — are, nevertheless, **the very experiences that a man in this region of spiritland finds absolutely necessary for himself**.

Since a man in the fifth region lives in his own true self, he is lifted out of everything from the lower worlds that envelops him during his incarnations. He is what he ever was and ever will be during the course of his incarnations. He lives in

the governing power of the intentions that prevail during these incarnations, and that he grafts into his own self. **He looks back on his own past and feels that all he has experienced in it will be brought into service in the intentions he has to realize in the future. There flash forth a kind of remembrance of his earlier, and a prophetic vision of his future lives.** We see, therefore, that what we call in this book *spirit self* lives in this region, as far as it is developed, in the reality that is appropriate to it. It develops itself still further and **prepares itself to make possible in a new incarnation the fulfillment of the spiritual intentions** in the realities of earthly life.

If, during a succession of sojourns in spiritland, the spirit self has evolved so far that it can move about quite freely there, it will evermore seek there its true home. **Life in the world of spirit will be as familiar to [the developed spirit self] as life in physical reality is to the earthly man.** The view-points of the spirit world operate from now on as the dominating ones, which it makes its own more or less consciously or unconsciously for its succeeding earth lives. The self can [now] feel itself to be a member of the divine world order. The limitations and laws of the earthly life do not affect it in its innermost being. Power for all that it carries out comes to it from this spiritual world. The spiritual world, however, is a unity. He who lives in it knows how the Eternal has worked creatively upon the past. **Out of the Eternal he can determine the direction for the future.** * (See Addendum 12.) His view over the past widens into a perfect one. The man who has reached this stage sets before himself aims that he intends to carry out in a coming incarnation. **From the spiritland he influences his future so that it runs its course in harmony with the true and spiritual.** Such a person during the stages between two incarnations **finds himself in the presence of all those exalted beings before whose gaze divine wisdom lies spread out unveiled,** because he has climbed up to the stage at which he can understand it.

Read the Addendum (12) to this passage. Talk about tough love! I am forever my own worst critic. If the humanist would only consider this, then his bias for the basic “goodness” of man and against the idea of divine judgement would dissolve.

In the *sixth region* of the spiritland a man will fulfill in all his actions what is most in accord with the true being of the world. **He cannot seek after what profits himself, but only after what ought to happen according to the right course of the world order.**

In the *seventh region* of the spiritland the limit of the three worlds is reached. Man stands in the presence of the *life-kernels*, which are transplanted from higher worlds into the three already described in order that in them they may fulfill their tasks. When a man has reached the boundary of the three worlds, he **recognizes himself in his own life-kernel.** This implies that for him the problems of these three worlds have been solved. **He has a complete view** of the entire life of these worlds. **In physical life the powers of the soul,** through which it obtains the experiences in

the spiritual world here described, remain *unconscious* under ordinary circumstances. They **work in their unconscious depths upon the bodily organs, which bring about the consciousness of the physical world. That is precisely the reason why these powers remain imperceptible for this world. The eye, too, does not see itself because forces are at work in it to make other things visible.** If one [is to] judge to what extent a human life running its course between birth and death can be the result of preceding earth lives, one must take into consideration [this] fact. A point of view that lies within this life ... is the natural [perspective at the outset, yet this viewpoint] can yield no possibility of correct judgment. For such a point of view, for instance, an earth life could appear full of suffering, imperfect. Yet, **seen from an extra-earthly viewpoint, this very configuration of the earth life with its suffering, its imperfections would prove to be the result of previous earth lives. By treading the path of knowledge as this is described in the next chapter, the soul sets itself free from the conditions of bodily life. Thus [the spiritually disposed soul] can perceive in a picture the experiences that it undergoes between death and a new birth.** Perception of this kind makes it possible to describe what happens in spiritland as has been done herein but little more than outline. Only when we do not neglect to hold before our minds the fact that the whole disposition of the soul is different in the physical body from its disposition during purely spiritual experiences, only then shall we see the description given here in the right light.

The Physical World and Its Connection with the Soul and Spiritland

The formations in the **soul world** and in **spiritland** cannot be the objects of **external [physical] sense perception**. The objects of sense perception are to be added as a third world to the two already described. **Man lives during his bodily existence simultaneously in the three worlds.** He perceives the things of the sensory world and acts upon them. The formations of the soul world act upon him through their forces of sympathy and antipathy, and his own soul excites waves in the soul world by its likes and dislikes, desires and wishes. The spiritual being of things, on the other hand, mirrors itself in his thought world and he himself, as thinking spirit-being, is a citizen of spiritland and a companion of all that lives in that region of the world. This makes it evident that the **sensory world is only a part of what surrounds us.** This part stands out from our general surrounding **with a certain independence because it can be perceived by senses that disregard the soul and spiritual parts.** These, however, belong just as much to this surrounding world as does the material part. Just as a piece of floating ice is substance of the surrounding water although it stands out prominently owing to particular qualities, so are the things perceptible to the senses substance of the surrounding soul and spirit worlds. They stand out from these worlds owing to particular qualities that make them perceptible to the senses. They are, speaking somewhat metaphorically, **condensed spirit and soul formations**, and the condensation **makes it possible for the senses to acquire knowledge of them.** In fact, **just as ice is only a form in which water exists, so are the objects of the senses only a form in which soul**

and spirit beings exist. If this has been grasped, it can also be understood that as water can pass over into ice, so the spirit world can pass over into the soul world, and the soul world into that of the senses.

Looked at from this point of view it can be seen why we can form thoughts about the things of the senses. Thus, there is a question that everyone who thinks must ask himself, “In what relation does the thought that we have about a stone stand to the stone itself?” This question rises in full clearness in the minds of those persons who look with especial penetration into external nature. They feel the consonance of the human thought world with the structure and order of nature. The great astronomer, Kepler, for example, speaks in a beautiful way about this harmony. He says, “True it is that the divine call that bids man study astronomy stands written in the world, not indeed in words and syllables, but factually by virtue of the adaptability of the human senses and concepts to the concatenations of the heavenly bodies and conditions.” Only because the things of the sensible world are nothing but condensed spirit beings is the man who lifts himself by means of his thoughts to these spirit beings able by thinking to understand the things. Sense objects originate in the spirit world. They are only another form of the spirit beings, and **when a man forms thoughts about things, his inner nature is merely directed away from the sensible form and out towards the spiritual archetypes of these things.**

To understand an object by means of thought is **a process that may be likened to the liquefaction of a solid body by fire in order that the chemist may examine it in its liquid form.**

The spiritual archetypes of the sense world are to be found in the various regions of the spiritland. In the fifth, sixth and seventh regions these archetypes are still found as living germ-points. **In the four lower regions they shape themselves into spiritual structures. The human spirit perceives a shadowy reflection of these spiritual formations when by thinking it tries to gain understanding of the things of the senses.** How these formations have condensed until they form the sense world is a problem for the seeker who strives towards a spiritual understanding of the world around him.

For human sense perception **this surrounding world is divided primarily into four distinctly separate stages** — the mineral, plant, animal and human. The *mineral kingdom* is perceived by the senses and comprehended by thought. Thus, when we form a thought about a mineral body, we have to do with two things — the sense object and the thought. Accordingly, **we must imagine that this sense object is a condensed thought being.** Now, **one mineral being acts on another in an external way.** It impinges on it and moves it. It warms it, lights it up, dissolves it, and so forth. This external kind of action can be expressed in thoughts. **We form thoughts about the way mineral things act on each other externally in accordance with [physical] law.** By this means our separate thoughts expand into a thought picture of the whole mineral world, and this thought picture is a reflection

of the archetype of the whole mineral world of the senses. It is to be found as a complete whole in the spirit world.

In the *plant kingdom* the phenomena of **growth and propagation** are added to the phenomenon of external action of one thing or another. The plant grows and brings forth from itself beings like itself. **Life is here added to what confronts us in the mineral kingdom.** The simple recollection of this fact leads to a view that is enlightening in this connection. **The plant has the power to create its living shape and to reproduce it in a being of its own kind.** In between the shapeless character of mineral matter as we meet it in gases, liquids, etc. and the living shape of the plant world, stand the forms of the crystals. **In the crystals we have to seek the transition from the shapeless mineral world to the plant kingdom** that has the capacity for forming living shapes. In this externally sensory formative process in both kingdoms, mineral and plant, we must see the sensory condensation of the purely spiritual process that takes place when the spiritual germs of the three higher regions of the spiritland form themselves into the spirit shapes of the lower regions. **The transition from the formless spiritual germ to the formed structure corresponds in the spiritual world to the process of crystallization.** This transition is the spiritual archetype of the process of crystallization. If this transition condenses so that the senses can perceive it in its outcome, it then exhibits itself in the world of senses as the process of mineral crystallization.

There is, however, also in the plant being a fashioned spirit germ. Here the living, fashioning capacity is still retained in the shaped being. **In the crystal the spirit germ has lost its constructive power during the process of fashioning.** It has exhausted its life in the shape produced. **The plant has shape and in addition it has the capacity to produce a shape.** The characteristic belonging to the spirit germs in the higher regions of the spiritland has been preserved in the plant life. The plant has, therefore, form **like the crystal, and to that is added the shaping or formative force.** Besides the form that the primal beings have assumed in the plant shape, there is another form working on that shape that bears the impress of the spirit beings of the higher regions. Only what manifests itself in the completed shape of the plant, however, is sensibly perceptible. The formative beings who give life to this shape are present but imperceptible in the plant kingdom. The physical eye sees the lily small today and some time later sees it grown larger. The formative force that evolves the latter out of the former is not seen by this eye. This formative force being is the part of the plant world that acts imperceptibly to the senses. The spirit germs have descended a stage in order to work in the kingdom of shapes. In spiritual science elementary kingdoms are spoken of. If we **designate the primal forms, which has as yet no shape, as the first elementary kingdom,** then the **force beings who work invisible to the senses as the craftsmen of plant growth may be designated as belonging to the second elementary kingdom.**

In the *animal world* sensation and impulse are added to the capacities for growth and propagation. These are manifestations of the soul world. A being endowed with these belongs to the soul world, receives impressions from it and reacts on it. Now,

every sensation and every impulse that arises in the animal is brought forth from the foundations of the animal soul. The shape is more enduring than the feeling or impulse. One may say that the life of sensation bears the same relation to the **more enduring living shape** that the self-changing plant shape bears to the rigid crystal. The plant exhausts itself to a certain extent in the shape-forming force; during its life it continues to add new shapes to itself. First it sends forth roots, then its leafy structure, later flowers, and finally its fruit and seeds. **The animal is enclosed within a shape complete within itself and develops within this the changeful life of feeling and impulse. This life has its existence in the soul world.** The plant grows and propagates itself; the animal feels and develops its impulses. They constitute for the animal the formless that is always developing into new forms. They have their **archetypal processes ultimately in the highest regions of spiritland**, but they carry out their activities in the soul world. There are thus in the animal world (in addition to the force) *beings* who, invisible to the senses, direct growth and propagation, others who have descended a stage deeper into the soul world. **In the animal kingdom formless beings who clothe themselves in soul sheaths are present as the master builders bringing about sensations and impulses. They are the real architects of the animal forms.** In spiritual science this region to which they belong may be called the *third elementary kingdom*.

Man, in addition to having the capacities named in plant and animal, **is furnished also with the power of elaborating his sensations into ideas** and thoughts and of controlling his impulses by thinking. The thought, which appears in the plant as shape and in the animal as soul force, makes its appearance in man in its own form as thought itself. **The animal is soul; man is spirit.** The spirit being, which in the animal is engaged in soul development, has now descended a stage deeper still. In the animal it is soul forming. In man it has entered into the world of sensory matter itself. The spirit is present within the human sensory body, and because it appears in a sensory garment, it can appear only as the shadowy reflection of the spirit being that thought represents. The spirit manifests in man conditioned by the physical brain organism, but at the same time it has become the inner being of man.

Thought is the form that the formless spirit being assumes in man, just as it takes on shape in the plant and soul in the animal. Consequently, man, insofar as he is a thinking being, is subject to no elementary kingdom fashioning him from without. His elementary kingdom works in his physical body. Only to the extent that man is shape and sentient being is he worked upon by elementary beings of the same kind as those working upon plants and animals. **The thought organism of man is elaborated entirely from within his physical body. In the spirit organism of man, in his nervous system that has developed into the perfect brain, we have sensibly visible before us what works on plants and animals as non-sensory force being.** That is, the animal shows self-feeling, but man self-consciousness. In the animal, spirit feels itself as soul. It does not yet grasp itself as spirit. **In man, the spirit recognizes itself as spirit although, owing to physical limitations, merely as a shadowy reflection of the spirit, as thought.**

(This following list actually appears upside down hierarchically.)

The threefold world, accordingly, falls into the following categories:

1. Realm of archetypal formless beings — **first elementary kingdom**
2. Realm of shape-creating beings — **secondary elementary kingdom**
3. Realm of soul beings — **third elementary kingdom**
4. Realm of created shapes (crystal forms) — **mineral kingdom**
5. Realm whose forms are sensibly perceptible and in which the shape-creating beings are active — **plant kingdom**
6. Realm whose forms are sensibly perceptible and in which the shape-creating and soul beings are active — **animal kingdom**
7. Realm whose forms are sensibly perceptible and in which the shape-creating and soul beings are active, and in which the spirit fashions itself in the form of thought within the sense world — **human kingdom**.

From this can be seen how **the basic constituents of man living in the body are connected with the spiritual world**. The physical body, the ether body, the sentient soul body and the intellectual soul are to be regarded as **archetypes of the spiritland condensed in the sensory world**. The physical body comes into existence through condensation of the human archetype to the point of sensory appearance. For this reason one can call this physical body also a being of the first elementary kingdom condensed to sensory perceptibility. The ether body comes into existence through the fact that the shape thus engendered maintains its mobility through a being that extends its activity into the kingdom of the senses but is not itself visible to the senses. If one wishes to characterize this being fully, it must be described as having its origin in the highest regions of spiritland and thence shaping itself in the second region into an archetype of life. As such an archetype of life it works in the sensory world. In a similar way, the being that builds up the sentient soul body has its origin in the highest regions of the spiritland, forms itself in the third spirit region into the archetype of the soul world, and as such works in the sensory world. The intellectual soul, however, comes into existence when in the fourth region of the spiritland the archetype of the thinking man gives itself a thought form in which it acts directly as thinking man in the world of the senses. Thus man stands within the world of the senses. Thus the spirit works on his physical body, ether body and sentient soul body. Thus the spirit comes into manifestation in the intellectual soul. **Archetypes in the form of beings who in a certain sense are external to man work upon the three lower members of his being. In his intellectual soul he himself becomes a conscious worker upon himself. The beings who work on his physical body are the same as those who form mineral nature. Beings of the kind that live in the plant kingdom work on his ether body, and those beings such as live in the animal kingdom work on his sentient soul body. Both are imperceptible to the senses but extend their activity into these kingdoms.**

Thus do the different worlds combine in action. **The universe [wherein man lives] is the expression of this combined activity.**

* * *

When we have grasped the sensory world in this way, the understanding opens up for beings of a kind different from those having their existence in the above mentioned four kingdoms of nature. One example of such beings is what may be called **the Folk or National Spirit**. This being does not manifest itself directly in a sensibly perceptible way, but **lives its life entirely in the sensations, feelings, tendencies and impulses observable in the common characteristics of a whole nation**. This is a being who does not incarnate in the sense world, but just as man forms his body out of substances sensibly visible, so this Folk Spirit **forms its body out of the substance of the soul world**. This soul body of the National Spirit is **like a cloud in which the members of a nation live**. Its influences become **evident in the souls of the men concerned, but it does not originate in these souls** themselves. The National Spirit remains merely a shadowy conception of the mind without being or life, an empty abstraction, to the man who does not picture it in this way.

Something similar may be said in reference to what one calls **the Spirit of the Age (Zeitgeist)**. Indeed, the spiritual outlook is extended in this way over a variety of other beings, both lower and higher, that **live in the human environment unseen** by the bodily senses. **Those who have powers of spiritual sight perceive such beings and can describe them. To the lower species of such beings belongs all that is described by observers of the spiritual world as salamanders, sylphs, undines and gnomes**. It should not be necessary to say that such descriptions are not to be considered reproductions of the reality that underlies them. If they were, then the world in question would be not a spiritual, but a grossly sensory one. **They are attempts at making clear a spiritual reality that can only be represented in this way, this is, by similes**. It is quite comprehensible that anyone who admits the validity of physical vision only, regards such beings as the offspring of confused fantasy and superstition. They can, of course, never become visible to the sensory eye because they have no sensory bodies. The superstition does not consist in regarding such beings as real, but in believing that they appear in a way perceptible to the physical senses. **Beings of such forms co-operate in the construction of the world**, and we come into contact with them as soon as we enter the higher regions closed to the bodily senses. Those people are not superstitious who see in such descriptions pictures of spiritual realities, but rather those who believe in the sensory existence of the pictures, as well as those who deny the spirit, because they think they must deny the sensory picture.

Mention must **also** be made of those **beings who do not descend to the soul world**, but whose vestment is composed of the **formations of spiritland alone**. **Man perceives them and becomes their companion when he opens his spiritual eye and ear to them**. Through such an opening much becomes intelligible to him that previously he could only stare at uncomprehendingly. It becomes bright around him, and he sees the primal causes of what takes place as effects in the world of the

senses. He comprehends what he either denied entirely when he had no spiritual eye, or in reference to which he had to content himself with saying, “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in thy philosophy.” **People with fine, spiritual feelings become uneasy when they begin to have a glimmering, when they become vaguely aware of a world different from the sensory one surrounding them, one in which they have to grope about as the blind grope among visible objects.** Nothing but the clear vision of these higher regions of existence and a thorough understanding and penetration of what takes place in them can really fortify a man and lead him to his proper goal. **Through insight into what lies hidden from the senses, man expands his nature in such a way that he feels his life prior to this expansion as “a mere dreaming about the world.”**

Wow ... “uneasy” is truly an understatement. To the ASP sojourner, it is abject terror at first. Then when mobility and some volition is regained, memory and interest in the abandoned physical world recedes, indeed as if all before had been “mere dreaming” and this new realm of archetypes proven the real waking world. Everybody who returns to share such experiences—even those who insist it is chemically induced hallucination—they comment on the sense of its “solid” reality, however fluid and changeable it also appears.

4. Thought Forms and the Human Aura (Also Addendum 13)

It has been said that the formations of any one of the three worlds can have reality for man only when he has the capacities or the organs for perceiving them. He perceives certain occurrences in space as light phenomena only because he has a correctly constructed eye. **How much of what really exists reveals itself to a being depends upon his receptivity.** A man, therefore, should never say that what is real is only what he can perceive. **Much can be real that he cannot perceive for lack of organs.**

Now, **the soul world and the spirit world are just as real as the sensory world.** Indeed, they are **real in a much higher sense.** No physical eye can see feelings and thoughts, yet they are real. Just as man by means of his outer senses has the corporeal world before him as an object of perception, so do **feelings, instincts, and thoughts become objects of perception for his spiritual organs.** Exactly as occurrences in space can be seen with the sensory eye as color phenomena, so can the above named soul and spiritual occurrences become, by means of the inner senses, perceptions that are analogous to the sensory color phenomena. To understand fully in what sense this is meant is only possible for one who has followed the path of knowledge described in the following chapter and has as a result developed his inner senses. For such a person the **psychic phenomena in the soul region surrounding him, and the spiritual phenomena in the spiritual region, become supersensibly visible. The feelings of other beings that he experiences ray out to him from them like light phenomena, and thoughts to**

which he directs his attention surge through spiritual space. For him, the thought of one man about another is not something imperceptible but, on the contrary, is a perceptible occurrence. **The content of a thought lives as such only in the soul of the thinker, but this content excites effects in the spirit world.** They are the perceptible occurrence to the spiritual eye. The thought streams out as an actual reality from one man and flows to the other, and **the way this thought acts on the other person is experienced as a perceptible occurrence** in the spiritual world. Thus the physically perceptible man is only part of the whole man for the one whose spiritual senses are unfolded. This physical man becomes the center of soul and spiritual outpourings. It is impossible to do more than faintly indicate the richly varied world that discloses itself here to the seer. A human thought, which otherwise lives only in the understanding of the listener, appears, for example, as **a spiritually perceptible color phenomenon.** Its color **corresponds with the character of the thought.** A thought that springs forth from a sensual impulse in a person has a different color from a thought conceived in the service of pure knowledge, noble beauty or the eternally good. Thoughts that spring from the sensual life course through the soul world in shades of red. A thought by which the thinker rises to higher knowledge appears in beautiful light yellow. A thought that springs from devoted and unselfish love rays out in glorious rose red. Just as the content of a thought comes to expression in its supersensibly visible form, so also does the greater or lesser degree of its definiteness. **The precise thought of the thinker shows itself as a formation with definite outlines; the confused idea appears as a wavering, cloudy formation.**

In this way the soul and spirit nature of man appear as **the supersensible part of the whole human being.**

The color effects perceptible to the spirit eye that ray out around the physical man observed in his activity, and that **envelop him like a somewhat egg-shaped cloud,** are **the human aura.** The size of this aura varies in different people, but we may say that the entire man appears **on the average twice as [tall] and four times as wide as the physical man.**

The most varied shades of color flood the aura. **This color flooding is a true picture of the inner human life.** As this changes, so do the shades of color change. Certain permanent qualities such as **talents, habits and traits of character,** however, express themselves also in permanent fundamental color shades.

Misunderstandings can arise in men who at present stand remote from the experiences of the path of knowledge described in a later chapter of this book — in regard to the nature of what is here described as the aura. We might imagine that what are here described as colors would stand before the soul just as the physical colors stand before the physical eye, but such a soul color would be nothing but hallucination. **Spiritual science is not in the least concerned with hallucinatory impressions,** and they are, in any case, not what is meant in the description now before us. We reach a correct conception if we keep the following in mind. **With a**

physical color, the soul experiences not only the sense impression, but through it, it has a *soul-experience*. When through the eye the soul perceives a yellow surface, this soul-experience is different from what it is when it perceives a blue surface. One may call this experience “living in yellow” or “living in blue.” Now the soul that has followed the path of knowledge has a similar “experience in yellow” when observing the active soul-experience of other beings; an “experience in blue” when observing devotional soul-moods. **The essential thing is not that the seer in visualization of another soul sees blue just as he sees this blue in the physical world, but that he has an *experience* that justifies his calling the visualization blue; just as the physical man calls a curtain blue, for instance.** Further, it is essential that the seer should be conscious of standing in an experience free of the body so that he gains the possibility of speaking **about the value and the meaning of the soul-life** in a world whose perception is **not mediated through the human body**. Although this meaning of the description must be taken into account, yet it is altogether a matter of course for the seer to speak of blue, yellow, green, and so forth, in the aura. **The aura varies greatly according to the different temperaments and dispositions of people. It likewise varies in accordance with the stages of spiritual development.** A man who yields completely to his animal impulses has an entirely different aura from one who lives much in the world of thought. The aura of a religiously disposed nature differs essentially from one that loses itself in the trivial experiences of the day. **In addition to this, all varying moods, all inclinations, joys and pains, find their expression in the aura.**

We have to compare the auras of various soul-experiences with each other in order to learn to understand the meaning of the color shades. **To begin with, take soul-experiences shot through with *strongly marked emotions*.** They may be divided into two kinds — those in which the soul is impelled to these emotions chiefly by the animal nature, and those in which these passions take a more subtle form, in which they are, so to speak, strongly influenced by reflection. In the first kind of experiences brown and reddish-yellow streams of color surge through the aura in definite locations. In persons with more subtle passions there appear in the same locations brighter reddish-yellow and green shades. One can notice that as intelligence increases the green shades become more frequent. **Persons who are very intelligent, but who give themselves over entirely to satisfying their animal impulses, show much green in their aura, but this green will always have an admixture more or less of brown or brownish-red. Unintelligent people show a great part of their aura permeated by brownish-red or even by dark blood-red currents.**

The auras of quiet, meditative, *thoughtful soul-moods* are essentially different from those of such passionate conditions. The brownish and reddish tones become less prominent and **various shades of green emerge**. In strenuous thinking the aura shows a pleasing green undertone. This is to a special degree the appearance of those natures who know how to adapt themselves to every condition of life.

Shades of blue appear in soul-moods full of devotion. The more a man places his self in the service of a cause, the more pronounced become the blue shades. In this class also one finds two quite different kinds of people. There are natures who are not in the habit of exerting their power of thought — passive souls who, as it were, have nothing to throw into the streams of events in the world but their good nature. Their aura glimmers with beautiful blue. This is also the appearance of many religious and devotional natures. **Compassionate souls and those who find pleasure in giving themselves up to a life of benevolence have a similar aura.** If such people are intelligent in addition, green and blue currents alternate, or the blue itself perhaps takes on a greenish shade. It is the **peculiarity of the active souls in contrast to the passive, that their blue saturates itself from within with bright shades of color.** Inventive natures, having **fruitful thoughts, radiate bright shades of color as if from an inner center.** This is true to the highest degree in those **persons whom we call wise, and especially in those full of fruitful ideas.** Generally speaking, all that implies *spiritual activity* takes more the form of rays spreading out from within, while everything that arises from the *animal nature* has the form of irregular clouds surging through the aura.

The **variations in color nuances** showing themselves in the corresponding aura formations depend on whether thoughts, springing from the soul's activity, are at the service of the soul's animal nature or that of an ideal, objective interest. **The inventive person who applies all his thoughts to the satisfaction of his sensual passions shows dark blue-red shades.** He, on the contrary, who places his thoughts selflessly at the service of an interest outside himself shows light reddish-blue color tones. A spiritual life combined with noble devotion and capacity for sacrifice shows rose-pink or light violet colors.

Not only does the fundamental disposition of the soul show its color surgings in the aura, but also transient passions, moods and other inner experiences. **A violent anger that breaks out suddenly creates red streams; feelings of injured dignity that expend themselves in a sudden welling up can be seen appearing in dark green clouds.** Color phenomena, however, do not appear only in irregular cloud forms but **also in distinctly defined, regularly shaped figures.** If we observe a man under the influence of an attack of fear, we see this, for instance, in his aura from top to bottom as undulating stripes of blue color suffused with a bluish-red shimmer. **When we observe a person who expects some particular event with anxiety, we can see red-blue stripes like rays constantly streaming through his aura from within outwards.**

Every sensation received from without can be observed by the one who has developed the faculty of exact spiritual perception. **Persons who are greatly excited by every external impression show a continuous flickering of small bluish-red spots and flecks in the aura.** In people who do not feel intensely, these flecks have an orange-yellow or even a beautiful yellow coloring. So-called absent-mindedness shows bluish flecks playing over into green and more or less changing in form.

By means of a more highly developed spiritual vision *three aspects of color phenomena* can be distinguished within the aura radiating and surging round a person. **Firstly, there are colors that bear more or less the character of opaqueness and dullness.** Certainly, if we compare them with colors seen with our physical eyes, they appear fugitive and transparent in comparison. Within the supersensible world itself, however, they make the space that they fill, comparatively speaking, opaque. They fill it **in the manner of mist formations.** A **second species of colors** consists of those that are light itself, as it were. **They light up the space they fill** so that it becomes through them itself a space of light. Color phenomena of **the third kind are quite different** from the first two. **They have a raying, sparkling, glittering character.** They fill space not merely with light but with glistening, glittering rays. There is **something active and inherently mobile** in these colors. The others are somewhat quiet and lack brilliance. These, on the contrary, **continuously produce themselves out of themselves**, as it were. Space is filled by the first two species of colors with a subtle fluidity that remains quietly in it. By the third, space is filled with an **ever self-enkindling life, with never resting activity.**

These three species of colors, however, are not ranged alongside each other in the human aura. They are not each enclosed in a separate section of space, but they **interpenetrate and suffuse each other in the most varied ways.** All three species can be seen playing through each other in one region of the aura, **just a physical [object], such as a bell, can simultaneously be heard and seen.** The aura thus becomes an exceedingly complicated phenomenon because we have to do with **three auras within each other, interpenetrating each other.** We can, however, overcome the difficulty by directing our attention to the three species alternately. In the supersensible world we then do something similar to what we do in the sensible, for example, when we close our eyes in order to give ourselves up fully to the impressions of a piece of music. **The seer has three different organs for the three species of color, and in order to observe undisturbed, he can open or close any one of the organs to impressions.** As a rule only one kind of organ can at first be developed by a seer, namely, the organ for the first species of color. A person at this stage can see only the one aura; the other two remain invisible to him. In the same way a person may be accessible to impressions from the first two but not from the third. **The higher stage of the gift of seeing consists in a person's being able to see all three auras, and for the purpose of study to direct his attention to the one or the other.**

The threefold aura is thus the supersensibly visible expression of the being of man. The three members, body, soul and spirit, come to expression in it.

The first aura is a mirror of the influence the body exercises on the human soul; the second characterizes the life of the soul itself, the soul that has raised itself above the direct influence of the senses, but is not yet devoted to the service of the eternal; the third mirrors the mastery the eternal spirit has won

over the transitory man. When descriptions of the aura are given, as here, it must be emphasized that these things are not only difficult to observe but above all difficult to describe. No one, therefore, should see in a description like this anything more than a stimulus to thought.

Thus, for the seer, the peculiarity of the soul's life expresses itself in the constitution of the aura. When he encounters a soul life that is given up entirely to passing impulses, passions and momentary external incitements, he sees the first aura in loudest colors; the second, on the contrary is only slightly developed. He sees in it only scanty color formations, while the third is barely indicated. Only here and there a small glittering spark of color shows itself, indicating that even in such a soul-mood the eternal already lives in man as a germ, but that it is driven into the background by the action of the sensory nature as has been indicated. **The more a man gets rid of his lower impulses, the less obtrusive becomes the first part of the aura. The second part then grows larger and larger, filling the color body within which the physical man lives ever more completely with its illuminating force. The more a man proves himself to be a servant of the eternal, the more does the wonderful third aura show itself** to be the part that bears witness to the extent to which he has become a citizen of the spiritual world because the divine self radiates into the earthly life through this part of the human aura. Insofar as men show this aura, they are **flames through whom the Godhead illumines this world.** They show through this part of the aura how far they know how to live not for themselves, but for **the eternally True, the nobly Beautiful and the Good.** They show how far they have wrung from their narrower self the power to offer themselves up on the altar of cosmic world activity.

Thus there comes to expression in the aura *what a man has made of himself* in the course of his incarnation.

All three parts of the aura contain colors of the most varied shades, but the **character of these shades changes with the stage of man's development.** In the *first part of the aura* there can be seen **the undeveloped life of impulse** in all shades from red to blue. These **shades have a dull, muddy character.** The obtrusive red shades point to the sensual desires, to the fleshly lusts, to the passion for the enjoyments of the palate and the stomach. Green shades appear to be found especially in those lower natures that incline to obtuseness and indifference, greedily giving themselves over to each enjoyment, but nevertheless shunning the exertions necessary to bring them to satisfaction. Where the desires are passionately bent on some goal beyond the reach of the capacities already acquired, brownish-green and yellowish-green auric colors appear. Certain modern modes of life actually breed this kind of aura.

A personal conceit that is entirely rooted in low inclinations, thus representing the lowest stage of egotism, shows itself in tones of muddy yellow to brown. Now it is clear that the animal life of impulse can take on a pleasing character. There is a purely natural capacity for self-sacrifice, a high form of which is to be found even

in the animal kingdom. This development of an animal impulse finds its most beautiful consummation in natural mother love. These **selfless natural impulses come to expression in the first aura in light reddish to rose-red shades of color. Cowardly fear and timidity in the face of external causes show themselves in the aura in brown-blue and grey-blue colors.**

The *second aura* again shows the most varied grades of colors. Brown and orange colored formations point to strongly developed conceit, pride and ambition. Inquisitiveness also announces its presence through red-yellow flecks. A bright yellow mirrors clear thinking and intelligence; green expresses understanding of life and the world. Children who learn easily have much green in this part of the aura. A green yellow in the second aura seems to betoken a good memory. **Rose-red indicates a benevolent, affectionate nature; blue is the sign of piety. The more piety approaches religious fervor, the more does the blue pass over into violet. Idealism and an earnest view of life in a higher sense is to be seen as indigo blue.**

The fundamental colors of the third aura are yellow, green and blue. Bright yellow appears here if the thinking is filled with lofty, comprehensive ideas that grasp the details as part of the whole of the divine world order. **If the thinking is intuitive and also completely purified of all sensuous visualizations, the yellow has a golden brilliance. Green expresses love towards all beings; blue is the sign of a capacity for selfless sacrifice for all beings.** If this capacity for sacrifice rises to the height of strong willing, devoting itself to the active service of the world, the blue brightens to light violet. If pride and desire for honor, as last remnants of personal egoism, are still present despite a more highly developed soul nature, others verging on orange appear beside the yellow shades. It must be remarked, however, that **in this part of the aura the colors are quite different from the shades we are accustomed to see in the world of the senses. The seer beholds a beauty and an exaltedness with which nothing in the ordinary world can be compared.**

This presentation of the aura cannot be rightly judged by anyone who does not attach the chief weight to the fact that the **seeing of the aura implies an extension and enrichment of what is perceived in the physical world** — an extension, indeed, that **aims at knowing the form of the soul life that possesses spiritual reality apart from the world of the senses.** This whole presentation has nothing whatever to do with reading character or a man's thoughts from an aura perceived in the manner of a hallucination. It seeks to expand knowledge in the direction of the spiritual world and has **nothing in common with the questionable art of reading human souls from their auras.**

Chapter IV: The Path of Knowledge

Current news (October 2006) featured recent protests at a university for the deaf. The culture there, as shaped by the faculty and upper

class students, refuses to consider deafness a disability. Sign language is promoted as superior to vocal languages. Students and visitors are discouraged from speaking audibly. The university president was pressured out of office because she dared to comment positively about developments in cochlear implant technology, how that the hearing impaired may thereby find relief and functionality in the general world of hearing. Students are reported to visit home after the first semester of study, refusing to speak audibly again to their own families. All are discouraged from seeking surgery or other therapy for correction of their hearing impairment. Hearing-able persons are expected to connect with the “privileged” deaf on their terms only, using sign language and respecting their preference for a society unpolluted by noise.

Public schools are supposed to be free of religious observances, symbols and language (at least in regard to Christianity), according to a twisted standard against “religious intolerance”. Tell me now, which are the intolerant –the schools or those who want their freedom of expression restored? Whole cities are declaring themselves smoke-free. I suppose trash day will be next, citing households for excessive fumes, triggering a political backlash against odor intolerance. Perhaps those with deadened olfactory nerves are actually more highly evolved? Apparently, the few no longer burdened by religious or moral sensibilities are already considered elite and therefore qualified to redefine perceptibility for the many. Don’t bother me with your over-sensitivity to right and wrong, beauty and truth ... we deserve to live in a conscience-free society, a community unpolluted by moral or aesthetic prejudice. Can’t we all just get along? Cover your eyes, stop up your ears, and pinch your nostrils ... then maybe nobody have cause to complain anymore.

Such is the price of their brand of peace. This is the kind of “paradise” promised by enemies of mankind’s spiritual development --a senseless, heartless, riskless, hopeless, loveless utopia. Problem is, even earthworms compete for space.

Knowledge of the spiritual science that is aimed at in this book can be acquired by every man for himself. **Descriptions of the kind given here present a thought picture of the higher worlds, and they are in a certain respect the first step towards personal vision. Man is a thought being and he can find his path to knowledge only when he makes thinking his starting-point.** A picture of the higher

worlds given to his intellect is not without value for him **even if for the time being it is only like a story about higher facts into which he has not yet gained insight through his own perception.** The thoughts that are given him **represent in themselves a force that continues working** in this thought world. This force will be active in him; **it will awaken slumbering capacities.** Whoever is of the opinion that it is superfluous to give himself up to such a thought picture is mistaken because he regards thought as something unreal and abstract. Thought is a living force, and just as for one who has knowledge, thought is present as a direct expression of what is seen in the spirit, so the imparting of this expression acts in the one to whom it is communicated as **a germ that brings forth from itself the fruit of knowledge.**

Anyone disdaining the application of strenuous mental exertion in the effort to attain the higher knowledge, and preferring to make use of other forces in man to that end, fails to take into account the fact that **thinking is the highest of the faculties possessed by man** in the world of his senses.

To him who asks, "How can I gain personal knowledge of the higher truths of spiritual science?" the answer must be given, "Begin by making yourself acquainted with what is communicated by others concerning such knowledge." Should he reply, "I wish to see for myself; I do not wish to know anything about what others have seen," one must answer, "It is in the very assimilating of the communications of others that the first step towards personal knowledge consists." If he then should answer, "Then I am forced to have blind faith to begin with," one can only reply, "In regard to something communicated it is not a case of belief or unbelief, but merely of an unprejudiced assimilation of what one hears." **The true spiritual researcher never speaks with the expectation of meeting blind faith in what he says.** He merely says, "I have experienced this in the spiritual regions of existence and I narrate my experiences." **He knows also that the reception of these experiences by another and the permeation of his thoughts with such an account are living forces making for spiritual development.**

Curiously, this is a reality about which the ASP community has learned caution. An experienter may inadvertently awaken similar experience in a close friend, spouse or family member (a specially serious matter involving children) by simply sharing candidly an account of the adventure. Power of suggestion? Exactly so ... but only because it is real experience.

What is here to be considered will only be rightly viewed by one who takes into account the fact that all knowledge of the worlds of soul and spirit slumbers in the profoundest depths of the human soul. It can be brought to light through the path of knowledge. We can grasp, however, not only what we have ourselves brought to light, but also what someone else has brought up from those depths of the soul. This is so even when we have ourselves not yet made any preparations for the treading

of that path of knowledge. **Correct spiritual insight awakens the power of comprehension in anyone whose inner nature is not beclouded by preconceptions and prejudices. Unconscious knowledge flashes up to meet the spiritual fact discovered by another, and this “flashing up” is not blind faith but the right working of healthy human understanding.** In this same healthy comprehension we should see a far better starting-point even for first hand cognition of the spiritual world than in dubious mystical contemplations or anything of a similar nature, in which we often fancy that we have something better than what is recognized by the healthy human understanding, when the results of genuine spiritual research are brought before it.

Imagine a teacher hoping to inspire a student to interest in geography. He may assign hours of meditation first upon the symbols and tools of map-making, then graduating to the survey of library maps. Or the student could spend those hours interviewing people who have traveled to far places and returned to relate their personal adventures. It's rather obvious which approach wields more “power of suggestion”. And a student with better practiced skills for listening and imagination will always go further than one who merely memorizes symbols and place names for the final exam and a candy reward.

One cannot, in fact, emphasize strongly enough how necessary it is that anyone who wishes to develop his capacity for higher knowledge should undertake the earnest cultivation of his powers of thought. This emphasis must be all the more pressing because **many persons who wish to become seers actually estimate lightly this earnest, self-denying labor of thinking.** They say, “Thinking cannot help me reach anything; the chief thing is sensation or feeling.” In reply it must be said that no one can in the higher sense, and means in truth, become a seer who has not previously worked himself into the life of thought. In this connection **a certain inner laziness plays an injurious role** with many persons. They do not become conscious of this laziness because it **clothes itself in a contempt [for supposed] abstract thought and idle speculation.** We completely misunderstand what thinking is, however, if we confuse it with a spinning of idle, abstract trains of thought. **Just as this abstract thinking can easily kill supersensible knowledge, so vigorous thinking, full of life, must be the groundwork on which it is based.**

It would, indeed, be more comfortable if one could reach the higher power of seeing while shunning the labor of thinking. Many would like this, but in order to reach it an **inner firmness is necessary, an assurance of soul** to which thinking alone can lead. **Otherwise there results merely a meaningless flickering of pictures here and there, a distracting display of soul phenomena that indeed gives pleasure to many, but that has nothing to do with a true penetration into the higher worlds.** Further, if we consider what purely spiritual experiences take place in a man who really enters the higher world, we shall then understand that the matter has still another aspect. **Absolute healthiness of the soul life is essential to**

the condition of being a seer. There is **no better means of developing this healthiness than genuine thinking**. In fact, it is possible for this healthiness to suffer seriously if the exercises for higher development are not based on thinking. Although it is true that the power of spiritual sight makes a healthy and correctly thinking man still healthier and more capable in life than he is without it, it is equally true that all **attempts to develop oneself while shirking the effort of thought, all vague dreamings in this domain, lend strength to fantasy and illusion and tend to place the seeker in a false attitude towards life**. No one who wishes to develop himself to higher knowledge has anything to fear if he pays heed to what is said here, but the attempt should only be made under the above pre-supposition. This pre-supposition has to do only with man's soul and spirit. To speak of any conceivable kind of injurious influence upon the bodily health is absurd under this assumption.

Medical advisors will insist that ASP presents no actual physical danger, however threatened the sufferer feels. Rather than trying to persuade the subject that these terrors are only hallucination (no help at all for anyone actually trapped in such a spell), these same advisors will sometimes encourage people to welcome the experience as a chance to enjoy mobility out-of-body. It doesn't matter, then, whether the doctor or patient believes ASP perception is real or not. It becomes merely a new, vivid kind of dreaming.

The anthroposophist approach, however, would say that all imaginations—day or night dreaming—are shadows of true spiritual perception. One is warned not to focus on the shadows, either in persistent fear or pleasure. Just like the materialistic assumption that only physically touchable things can be real, a pre-occupation with early ASP visions is a form of idolatry, distracting the inquiring mind from its rightful pursuit of truth and leeching energy from daily waking obligations. The ASP sojourner --whether experienced as the hunter or the prey, the tragedian or the argonaut—is prone to suffer soul effects of ill-health unless he or she can overcome both the terror and the siren song of engaging ASP as merely another sensory experience.

Unfounded disbelief is indeed injurious. It works in the recipient as a repelling force. It hinders him from receiving fructifying thoughts. Not blind faith, but just this reception of the thought world of spiritual science is the prerequisite to the development of the higher senses. **The spiritual researcher approaches his student with the injunction, “You are not required to believe what I tell you, but to think it,** to make it the content of your own thought world, then my thoughts will of themselves bring about your recognition of their truth.” This is the attitude of the spiritual researcher. He gives the stimulus. **The power to accept what is said as true springs forth from the inner being of the learner himself.** It is in this

manner that the views of spiritual science should be studied. Anyone who has the self-control to steep his thoughts in them may be sure that after a shorter or longer period of time they will lead him to personal perception.

In what has been said here, there is already indicated **one of the first qualities that everyone wishing to acquire a vision of higher facts has to develop**. It is the **unreserved, unprejudiced [receptivity] to what is revealed** by human life or by the world external to man. If a man approaches a fact in the world around him with a judgment arising from his life up to the present, he shuts himself off by this judgment from the quiet, complete effect that the fact can have on him. The learner must be able each moment to make of himself a perfectly empty vessel into which the new world flows. Knowledge is received only in those moments in which **every [pre]judgment, every criticism coming from ourselves, is silent**. For example, when we meet a person, the question is not at all whether we are wiser than he. **Even the most unreasoning child has something to reveal to the greatest sage**. If he approaches the child with prejudgment, be it ever so wise, he pushes his wisdom like a dulled glass in front of what the child ought to reveal to him.*

* One can very well see, precisely from what is stated here, that in the requirement of “unreservedly laying oneself open” there is no question of shutting out one's own judgment or of giving oneself up to blind faith. Anything of that sort would quite obviously have no sense or meaning in regard to a child.

Blessed are the poor in spirit....

Complete inner selflessness is necessary for this yielding of oneself up to the revelations of the new world. If a man tests himself to find out in what degree he possesses this accessibility to its revelations, he will make astonishing discoveries regarding himself. Anyone who wishes to tread the path of higher knowledge must train himself to be **able at any moment to obliterate himself with all his prejudices**. As long as he obliterates himself the revelations of the new world flow into him. Only a high grade of such selfless surrender enables a man to receive the higher spiritual facts that surround him on all sides. **We can consciously develop this capacity** in ourselves. We can try, for example, to **refrain from any judgment on people around us**. We should obliterate within ourselves **the gauge of “attractive” and “repellent,” of “stupid” or “clever,”** that we are accustomed to apply and **try without this gauge to understand persons purely from and through themselves**. The best exercises can be made with people for whom one has an aversion. We should suppress this aversion with all our power and allow everything that they do to affect us without bias. Or, if we are in an environment that calls forth this or that judgment, we should suppress the judgment and free from criticism, **lay ourselves open to impressions**.*

* This open-minded and uncritical laying of ourselves open has nothing whatever to do with blind faith. The important thing is **not that we should believe blindly in**

anything, but that we should not put a blind judgment in the place of the living impression.

We should allow things and events to speak to us rather than speak about them ourselves, and we also should **extend this to our thought world**. We should suppress in ourselves what prompts this or that thought and **allow only what is outside to produce the thoughts**. Only when such exercises are carried out with holiest earnestness and perseverance do they lead to the goal of higher knowledge. He who undervalues such exercises knows nothing of their worth, and he who has experience in such things knows that **selfless surrender and freedom from prejudice are true producers of power**. Just as heat applied to the steam boiler is transformed into the motive power of the locomotive, so do these exercises in selfless, spiritual self-surrender **transforms themselves in man into the power of seeing in the spiritual worlds**.

Blessed are the meek....

By this exercise a man makes himself receptive to all that surrounds him, but to this receptivity he must **allow correct valuation also to be added**. As long as he is inclined to value himself too highly at the expense of the world around him, he bars himself from the approach to higher knowledge. **The seeker who yields himself up to the pleasure or pain that any thing or event in the world causes him is enmeshed by such an overvaluation of himself**. Through his pleasure and his pain he learns nothing about the things, but merely something about himself. If I feel sympathy with a man, I feel to begin with nothing by my relation to him. If I make myself mainly dependent on this feeling of pleasure, of sympathy, for my judgment and my conduct, I place my personality in the foreground — I obtrude it upon the world. I want to thrust myself into the world just as I am, instead of accepting the world in an unbiased way, allowing it to assert itself in accordance with the forces acting on it. In other words I am tolerant only of what harmonizes with my peculiarities. In regard to everything else I exert a repelling force. **As long as a man is enmeshed by the sensible world, he acts in an especially repelling way on all influences that are non-sensory. The learner must develop in himself the capacity to conduct himself toward things and people in accordance with their own peculiar natures, and to allow each of them to count at its due worth and significance. Sympathy and antipathy, pleasure and displeasure, must be made to play quite new roles. It is not a question here of man's eradicating them, of his blunting himself to sympathy and antipathy.** On the contrary, the more a man develops the capacity to refrain from allowing immediately by a judgment, an action, the finer will his sensitivity become. He will find that **sympathies and antipathies take on a higher character if he curbs those he already has. Even something that is at first most unattractive has hidden qualities. It reveals them if a man does not in his conduct obey his selfish feelings.** A person who has developed himself in this respect has in every way **a greater delicacy of feeling than one who is undeveloped** because he does not allow his own personality to make him unimpressionable. Every inclination that a man follows blindly blunts the

power to see things in his environment in their true light. **By obeying inclination we thrust ourselves through the environment instead of laying ourselves open to it and feeling its true worth.**

Blessed are they that mourn....

Man becomes independent of the changing impressions of the outer world when each pleasure and pain, each sympathy and antipathy, **no longer call forth in him an egotistical response and conduct. The pleasure we feel in a thing makes us at once dependent on it. We lose ourselves in it.** A man who loses himself in the pleasure or pain caused by every varying impression cannot tread the path of spiritual knowledge. He must accept pleasure and pain with equanimity. Then he ceases to lose himself in them and begins instead to understand them. A pleasure to which I surrender myself **devours my being in the moment of surrender.** I should use the pleasure only in order to arrive through it at an understanding of the thing that arouses pleasure in me. The important point should not be that the thing has aroused pleasure in me. **I should experience the pleasure and through it the nature of the thing. The pleasure should only be an intimation to me that there is in the thing a quality capable of giving pleasure. This quality I must learn to understand.** If I go no farther than the pleasure, if I allow myself to be entirely absorbed in it, then it is only myself who lives in it. If the pleasure is only the opportunity for me to experience a quality or property of the thing itself, I enrich my inner being through this experience. To the seeker, pleasure and displeasure, joy and pain, must be opportunities for learning about things. **The seeker does not become blunted to pleasure or pain through this. He raises himself above them in order that they may reveal to him the nature of the things. By developing himself in this respect, he will learn to understand what instructors pleasure and pain are.** He will feel with every being and thereby receive the revelation of its inner nature. The seeker never says to himself merely, “Oh, how I suffer!” or “Oh, how glad I am!” but always, **“How does suffering speak? How does joy speak?”** **He eliminates the element of self in order that pleasure and joy from the outer world may work on him.** By this means there develops in a man **a completely new manner of relating himself to things.** Formerly he responded to this or that impression by this or that action, only because the impressions caused him joy or unhappiness. Now he causes pleasure and displeasure to become also the organs by which things tell him what they themselves really are in their own nature. **Pleasure and pain change from mere feelings within him to organs of sense by which the external world is perceived.** Just as the eye does not act itself when it sees something, but causes the hand to act, so pleasure and pain do not bring about anything in the spiritual seeker insofar as he employs them as means of knowledge, but they receive impressions, and what is experienced through pleasure and displeasure causes the action **When a man uses pleasure and displeasure in such a way that they become organs of transmission, they build up for him within his soul the actual organs through which the soul world opens up to view.** The eye can serve the body only by being an organ for the transmission of sense impressions. **Pleasure and pain become the eyes of the soul when they cease to**

be of value merely to themselves and begin to reveal to one's soul the other soul outside it.

Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness....

By means of the qualities mentioned, the seeker for knowledge places himself in a condition that allows what is really present in the world around him to act upon him without disturbing influences from his own peculiarities. **He has also to fit himself into the spiritual world around him in the right way because he is as a thinking being a citizen of the spiritual world.** He can be this in the right way only if during mental activity he **makes his thoughts run in accordance with the eternal laws of truth, the laws of the spiritland.** Only thus can that land act on him and reveal its facts to him. A man never reaches the truth as long as he gives himself up to the thoughts continually coursing through his ego. If he permits this, his thoughts take a course imposed on them by the fact of their coming into existence within the bodily nature. **The thought world of a man who gives himself up to a mental activity determined primarily by his physical brain looks irregular and confused.** In it a thought enters, breaks off, is driven out of the field by another. Anyone who tests this by listening to a conversation between two people, or who observes himself in an unprejudiced way, will gain an idea of this mass of confused thoughts. As long as a man devotes himself only to the calls of the life of the senses, **his confused succession of thoughts will always be set right again by the facts of reality.** I may think ever so confusedly but in my actions **everyday facts force upon me the laws corresponding to the reality.** My mental picture of a city may be most confused, but if I wish to walk along a certain road in the city, I must accommodate myself to the conditions it imposes on me. The mechanic can enter his workshop with ever so varied a whirl of ideas, but the laws of his machines compel him to adopt the correct procedure in his work. Within the world of the senses facts exercise their continuous corrective on thought. If I come to a false opinion by thinking about a physical phenomenon or the shape of a plant, the reality confronts me and sets my thinking right.

Blessed are the pure in heart....

It is quite different when I consider my relations to the higher regions of existence. They reveal themselves to me only if I enter their worlds with already strictly controlled thinking. There my thinking must give me the right, the sure impulse, otherwise I cannot find proper paths. **The spiritual laws prevailing within these worlds are not condensed so as to become sensibly perceptible, and therefore they are unable to exert on me the compulsion described above. I am able to obey these laws only when they are allied to my own as those of a thinking being.** Here I must be my own sure guide. The seeker for knowledge must therefore make his thinking something that is strictly regulated in itself. His thoughts must by degrees disaccustom themselves entirely from taking the ordinary daily course. They must in their whole sequence take on the inner character of the spiritual world. **He must be able constantly to keep watch over**

himself in this respect and have himself in hand. With him, **one thought must not link itself arbitrarily with another**, but only in the way that corresponds with the severely exact contents of the thought world. The transition from one idea to another must correspond with the strict laws of thought. The man as thinker must be, as it were, constantly a copy of these thought laws. He must shut out from his train of thought all that does not flow out of these laws. **Should a favorite thought present itself to him, he must put it aside if it disturbs the proper sequence. If a personal feeling tries to force upon his thoughts a direction not inherent in them, he must suppress it.**

Plato required those who wished to attend his school first to go through a course of mathematical training. **Mathematics with its strict laws, which do not accommodate themselves to the course of ordinary sensory phenomena, form a good preparation for the seeker of knowledge.** If he wishes to make progress in the study of mathematics, he has to renounce all personal, arbitrary choice, all disturbances. The seeker prepares himself for his task by **overcoming through his own choice all the arbitrary thinking that naturally rules in him.** He learns thereby to follow purely the demands of thought. So, too, he must learn to do this in all thinking intended to serve spiritual knowledge. This thought life must itself be a copy of undisturbed mathematical judgments and conclusions. The seeker must strive wherever he goes and in whatever he does to be able to think after this manner. Then there will flow into him the intrinsic characteristic laws of the spirit world that pass over and through him without a trace as long as his thinking bears its ordinary confused character. Regulated thinking brings him from sure starting points to the most hidden truths. What has been said, however, must not be looked at in a one-sided way. Although mathematics act as a good discipline for the mind, one can arrive at pure healthy, vital thinking without mathematics.

Blessed are the merciful....

What the seeker of knowledge strives for in his thinking, he must also strive for in his actions. He must be able to act in accordance with the laws of the nobly beautiful and the eternally true without any disturbing influences from his personality. These laws must be able constantly to direct him. Should he **begin to do something he has recognized as right** and find his personal feelings not satisfied by that action, he must not for that reason forsake the road he has entered on. On the other hand, he must not pursue it just because it gives him joy, if he finds that it is not in accordance with the laws of the eternally beautiful and true. In everyday life people allow their actions to be decided by what satisfies them personally, by what bears fruit for themselves. In so doing they force upon the world's events the direction of their personality. They do not bring to realization the true that is traced out in the laws of the spirit world, rather do they realize the demands of their self-will. We only act in harmony with the spiritual world when we follow its laws alone. From what is done only out of the personality, there result no forces that can form a basis for spiritual knowledge. **The seeker of knowledge may not ask only, "What brings me advantages; what will bring me success?"**

He must also be able to ask, “What have I recognized as the good?”

Renunciation of the fruits of action for his personality, renunciation of all self-will; these are the stern laws that he must prescribe for himself. Then he treads the path of the spiritual world, his whole being penetrated by these laws. He becomes free from all compulsion from the sense world; his *spirit man* raises itself out of the sensory sheath. He thus makes actual progress on the path towards the spiritual and thus he spiritualizes himself. One may not say, “Of what use to me are the resolutions to follow purely the laws of the true when I am perhaps mistaken concerning what is true?” The important thing is the striving, and the spirit in which one strives. **Even when the seeker is mistaken, he possesses, in his very striving for the true, a force that turns him away from the wrong road. Should he be mistaken, this force seizes him and guides him to the right road.** The very objection, “But I may be mistaken,” is itself harmful unbelief. It shows that the man has no **confidence in the power of the true**. The important point is that **he should not presume to decide on his aims in accordance with his own egotistical views, but that he should selflessly yield himself up to the guidance of the spirit itself. It is not the self-seeking will of man that can prescribe for the True. On the contrary, what is true must itself become lord in man, must permeate his whole being, make him a copy of the eternal laws of the spiritland. He must fill himself with these eternal laws in order to let them stream out into life.**

Just as the seeker of knowledge must be able to have strict control of thinking, so **he must also have control of his will**. Through this **he becomes in all modesty — without presumption — a messenger of the world of the true and the beautiful**. Through this **he ascends to be a participant in the spirit world**. Through this he is lifted from stage to stage of development because **one cannot reach the spiritual life by merely seeing it**. On the contrary, **one has to reach it by experiencing it, by living it**.

Blessed are the peacemakers....

If the seeker of knowledge observes the laws here described, **his soul experiences relating to the spiritual world will take on an entirely new form**. He will no longer live merely within them. They will no longer have a significance merely for his personal life. They will develop into soul perceptions of the higher world. **In this soul the feelings of pleasure and displeasure, of joy and pain, do not live for themselves only, but grow into soul organs, just as in his body eyes and ears do not lead a life for themselves alone but selflessly allow external impressions to pass through them. Thereby the seeker of knowledge wins that calmness and assurance in his soul constitution necessary for research in the spiritual world.**

A great pleasure will no longer make him merely jubilant, but may be the messenger to him of qualities in the world that have hitherto escaped him. It will leave him calm, and through the calm the characteristics of the pleasure-giving beings will reveal themselves to him. Pain will no longer merely fill him with grief, but be able to tell him also what the qualities are of the being that causes the pain. Just as the eye does not desire anything for itself but shows man the direction of the

road he has to take, so will pleasure and pain guide the soul safely along its path. **This is the *state of balance of soul that the seeker of knowledge must reach*.** The less pleasure and pain exhaust themselves in the waves that they throw up in the inner life of the seeker of knowledge, the more will they form eyes for the supersensible world. **As long as a man *lives in* pleasure and pain he cannot gain knowledge by means of them. When he learns how to live *by means of them*, when he withdraws his feeling of self from them, then they become his organs of perception and he sees by means of them, attaining through them to knowledge.** It is incorrect to think that the seeker of knowledge becomes a dry, colorless being, incapable of experiencing joy and sorrow. **Joy and sorrow are present in him, but when he seeks knowledge in the spiritual world, they are present in a transformed shape; they have become eyes and ears.**

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake....

As long as we live in a personal relationship with the world, things reveal only what links them with our personality. This, however, is their transitory path. If we withdraw ourselves from our transitory part and live with our feeling of self, with our “I,” in our permanent part, then our transitory part becomes an intermediary for us. What reveals itself through it is an imperishable, an eternal in the things. **The seeker of knowledge must be able to establish this relationship between his own eternal part and the eternal in the things [perceived].** Even before he begins other exercises of the kind described, and also during them, **he should *direct his thought to the imperishable* part.** When I observe a stone, a plant, an animal or a man, I should be able to remember that in each of them an eternal expresses itself. I should be able to ask myself, “What is the permanent that lives in the transitory stone, in the transitory man? **What will outlast the transitory sensory appearance?**” We ought not to think that to direct the spirit to the eternal in this way destroys our careful consideration of, and sense for, the qualities of everyday affairs and estranges us from the immediate realities. On the contrary, every leaf, **every little insect will unveil to us innumerable mysteries when not only our eyes but through the eyes of spirit is directed upon them. Every sparkle, every shade of color, every cadence will remain vividly perceptible to the senses. Nothing will be lost, but in addition, unlimited new life will be gained.** Indeed, the person who does not understand how to observe even the tiniest thing with the eye, will only attain to pale, bloodless thoughts, not to spiritual sight.

It depends upon the attitude of mind we acquire in this direction. What stage we shall succeed in reaching will depend on our capacities. **We have only to do what is right and leave everything else to evolution. It must be enough for us at first to direct our minds to the permanent. If we do this, the knowledge of the permanent will awaken in us through this. We must wait until it is given, and it is given at the right time to each one who with patience waits and works. A man soon notices during such exercises what a mighty transformation takes place within him. He learns to consider each thing as important or unimportant only insofar as he recognizes it to be related to a permanent, to an**

eternal. He comes to a valuation and estimate of the world different from the one he has hitherto had. His whole feeling takes on a new relationship toward the entire surrounding world. **The transitory no longer attracts him merely for its own sake as formerly. It becomes for him a member, an image of the eternal, and this eternal living in all things he learns to love.** It becomes familiar, just as the transitory was formerly familiar to him. This again does not cause his estrangement from life. He only learns to value each thing according to its true significance. Even the vain trifles of life will not pass him by quite without trace, but the man seeking after the spiritual no longer loses himself in them, but recognizes them at their limited worth. He sees them in their true light. He is a poor discerner of the spiritual who would go wandering in the clouds losing sight of life. From his high summit **a true discerner with his power of clear survey and his just and healthy feeling for everything will know how to assign to each thing its proper place.**

Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you] ... for my sake.

Thus there opens out to the seeker of knowledge the possibility of ceasing to obey only the unreliable influences of the external world of the senses that turn his will now here, now there. Through higher knowledge he has seen the eternal being of things. By means of the transformations of his inner world he has gained the capacity for perceiving this eternal being. For the seeker of knowledge the following thoughts have a special weight. When he acts out of himself, he is then **conscious of acting also out of the eternal being of things because the things give utterance [through] him in their being.** He, therefore, acts in harmony with the eternal world order when **he directs his action out of the eternal living within him.** He thus knows himself no longer merely as a being impelled by things. He knows that he impels them according to the law implanted within them that have become the laws of his own being. This ability to act out of his inner being can only be an ideal towards which he strives. **The attainment of the goal lies in the far distance, but the seeker of knowledge must have the will to recognize clearly this road. This is his will to freedom, for freedom is action out of one's inner being.** Only he may act out of his inner being who draws his motives from the eternal. **A being who does not do this,** acts according to other motives than those implanted in things. Such a person **opposes the [true] world order, and the world order must then prevail against him.** That is to say, what he plans to carry through by his will cannot in the last resort take place. **He cannot become free. The arbitrary will of the individual being annihilates itself through the effects of its deeds.**

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven....

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Whoever is able to work upon his inner life in such a way climbs upwards from stage to stage in spiritual knowledge. **The reward of his exercises will be the**

unfolding of certain vistas of the supersensible world to his spiritual perception. He learns the real meaning of the truths communicated about this world, and he will receive confirmation of them through his own experience. If this stage is reached, he encounters an experience that can only come through treading this path. Something occurs whose significance can only now become clear to him. **Through the great spiritual guiding powers of the human race there is bestowed on him what is called *initiation*. He becomes a disciple of wisdom.** The less one sees in such initiation something that consists in an outer human relationship, the more correct will be his conception of it. What **the seeker of knowledge** now experiences can only be indicated here. He **receives a new home. He becomes thereby a conscious dweller in the supersensible world. The source of spiritual insight now flows to him from a higher region.** The light of knowledge from this time forth does not shine upon him from without, but he is himself placed at its fountainhead where the problems that the world offers receive a new illumination. **Henceforth he holds converse no longer with the *things that are shaped by the spirit, but with the shaping spirit itself.*** At the moments of attaining spiritual knowledge, **the [transitory] personality's own life exists now only in order to be a conscious image of the eternal.** Doubts about the spirit that could formerly arise in him vanish because only he can doubt who is deluded by things regarding the spirit ruling in them. Since the disciple of wisdom is able to hold intercourse with the spirit itself, each false form vanishes in which he had previously imagined the spirit. The false form under which one conceives the spirit is superstition. **The initiate has passed beyond all superstition because he has knowledge of the spirit's true form. Freedom from the prejudices of the personality, of doubt, and of superstition — these are the characteristics of the seeker who has attained to discipleship on the path of higher knowledge. We must not confuse this state in which the personality becomes one with the all-embracing spirit of life, with an absorption into the universal spirit that annihilates the personality.** Such a disappearance does not take place in a true development of the personality. Personality continues to be preserved as such in the relationship into which it enters with the spirit world. It is not the subjection of the personality, but its highest development that occurs. If we wish to have a simile for this coincidence or union of the individual spirit with the all-encompassing spirit, we cannot choose that of many different coinciding circles that are lost in one circle, but we must choose the picture of many circles, each of which has a quite distinct shade of color. These variously colored circles coincide, but each separate shade preserves its color existence within the whole. Not one loses the fullness of its individual power.

The further description of the path will not be given here. It is given as far as possible in my *Occult Science, an Outline*, which forms a continuation of this book.

The last section emboldened above and the following are clearly a warning off the “path” taken by many theosophists of Steiner’s day, as well as so many New Age seekers of this generation. Here is the core message of this book. To realize real spiritual know-how, it is clear we

cannot remain “of the world” as pawns of this spiritually deficient cultural age. Yet we are called to continue “in the world” and therefore messengers of peace and freedom yet vulnerable to its rejections and torments. Steiner --like Jesus Christ in his famous “sermon on the mount”-- is proposing a drugless, prideless, demystified, unritualized road to spiritual knowing, one that is self-sacrificing and thereby truly Self-freeing. All lesser paths represent a return to the personality-numbing enslavement offered so ingeniously by the enemies of mankind’s true destiny, a counterfeit course to end strife and grief by devaluing, demonizing and finally deadening true spiritual awareness.

What is said here about the path of spiritual knowledge can all too easily, through failure to understand it, tempt us to consider it as a recommendation to cultivate *certain moods of soul* that would lead us to turn away from the immediate, joyous and strenuously active, experience of life. As against this, it must be emphasized that the particular attitude of the soul that renders it fit to experience directly the reality of the spirit, cannot be extended as a general demand over the entire life. **It is possible for the seeker after spiritual existence to bring his soul for the purpose of research into the necessary condition of being withdrawn from the realities of the senses, without that withdrawal estranging him from the world.** On the other hand, however, it must be recognized that a knowledge of the spiritual world, not merely a knowledge gained by treading the path, but also a knowledge acquired through grasping the truths of spiritual science with the unprejudiced, healthy human intellect, leads also to a higher moral status in life, to a knowledge of sensory existence that is in accord with the truth, to certainty in life, and to inward health of the soul.

Addenda

No. 1. To speak of a vital force was still regarded a short time ago as a sign of an unscientific mind. Today **there are here and there among scientists some who are not averse to the once entertained idea of a *vital force*.** But anyone who examines the course of modern scientific development will, nevertheless, perceive the more consistent logic of those who, in view of this development, refuse to listen to anything about such a vital force. Certainly, vital force does not belong to what are called today forces of nature. Anyone who is not willing to pass from the habits of thought and the conceptions of modern science to a higher mode of thinking should [also] not speak of vital force. **Only the mode of thinking and the presuppositions of spiritual science make it possible to deal with such things without inconsistency.** Further, those thinkers who seek to form their conclusions purely on the ground of modern science have abandoned the belief that obtained in the latter half of the nineteenth century, namely, that the phenomena of life could

only be explained through references to the same forces that are at work in inanimate nature. The book of such a noted naturalist as Oskar Hertwig, *The Development of Organisms; A Refutation of Darwin's Theory of Chance*, is a scientific phenomenon that sheds its light far and wide. **It opposes the assumption that the inter-workings of mere physical and chemical laws are able to shape the living thing.** It is also significant that, **in so-called Neo-Vitalism, a view is becoming prevalent that also admits the activity of a special force in living things** much after the manner of the older theory of vital force. In this domain, however, we shall never be able to get beyond shadowy abstract concepts unless we recognize that the only possible way of reaching what in life transcends in its activity the inorganic forces is by means of a mode of perception that rises to supersensible vision. The point is that the kind of knowledge modern science has been applying to the inorganic cannot be carried over into the region of life, but that an entirely different kind of knowledge must be acquired.

Per my own recent study regarding the modern history of energetic therapies, Vitalism as a scientific theory never died. The osteopathic and chiropractic schools of medicine pre-suppose an intelligent vital force to heal and maintain a physical body. This has been carried to more mystical levels recently, even resembling animistic types of healing art, except that the energy is perceived to be mostly impersonal intelligence, a body's innate know-how re-awakened to its health-promoting potential via the trust relationship between healer and patient. Some of these disciplines include therapeutic massage, intentioned touch, magnetic resonance, bio-energetic response to chemical allergens or deficiencies, muscle testing diagnostics (applied kinesiology), sacral-cranial fluid therapies, as well as traditional faith-based prayer rituals.

No. 2. When the sense of touch of the lower organisms is mentioned here, the word “sense” does not mean the same thing referred to by this term in the usual descriptions of the sense. Indeed, from the point of view of spiritual science, much can be said against the use of this word. What is meant here by sense of touch is rather the general attaining to awareness of an external impression in contrast to the special attaining to awareness that consists in seeing, hearing, and so forth.

No. 3. It may appear as if the manner of dividing the being of man employed in this book rests upon a purely arbitrary differentiation of parts within the unitary soul life. It must be emphasized that this differentiation within the unitary soul life may be compared with the phenomenon of the seven color nuances in the rainbow, caused by light passing through a prism. What the physicist accomplishes with his explanation of the phenomenon of light through his study of this process, and the resultant seven shades of color, is accomplished by the spiritual scientist with regard to the soul being of man. The seven members in light become visible

through an external contrivance, while the seven members of the soul become observable by a method consistent with the spiritual nature of the soul being of man. **The soul's true nature cannot be grasped without the knowledge of this inner organization because the soul, through its three members, physical body, life body and soul body, belongs to the transitory world; through its other four members, it is rooted in the eternal. In the unitary soul the transitory and the eternal are indistinguishably united.** Unless one is aware of this differentiation of the soul, it is not possible to understand its relation to the world as a whole. Another comparison may also be used. The chemist separates water into hydrogen and oxygen. Neither of these substances can be observed in the unitary water. Nevertheless, each has its own proper existence. Hydrogen and oxygen both unite with other substances. Thus at death, the three lower members of the soul unite with the transitory part of the world being; the four higher members unite with the eternal. Anyone who objects to taking this differentiation of the soul into account resembles an analytical chemist who objects to knowing anything about the separation of water into hydrogen and oxygen.

No. 4. It is necessary that the statements of spiritual science be taken literally because only in the accurate expression of the ideas have they value. For example, take the sentence, "They (the sensations) do not, in its case (namely, that of the animal), become interwoven with independent thoughts, transcending the immediate experiences." If the words "independent, transcending the immediate experiences" are left out of account, it would be easy to fall into the mistake of thinking that it is claimed here that the sensations and instincts of animals do not contain thoughts. The truth is, that **spiritual science is based on a knowledge that says that all inner experience of animals, as well as existence in general, is interwoven with thought. Only the thoughts of the animals are not those of an independent ego living in the animal, but those of the animal group-ego, which must be regarded as a being governing the animal from without. This group-ego is not, like the human ego, present in the physical world, but works down into the animal from the soul world** as described in part 1 of Chapter III. (Further details regarding this are to be found in my *Occult Science, an Outline*.) The point to make clear is that **in man, thought attains to an independent existence; that in him, it is not experienced indirectly in sensation, but directly in the soul as thought.**

No. 5. When it is said that little children say, "Charles is good," "Mary want to have this," it must be specially noted that the important point is not so much how soon children use the word "I," but when they connect the corresponding idea with that word. When children hear adults using the word, it is easy for them to use it too, without forming the idea of the "I." The generally late use of the word points to an important fact in evolution, namely, to the gradual unfolding of the idea "I" out of the dim "I" feeling.

No. 6. A description of the real nature of intuition is to be found in my books, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, and *Occult Science, an*

Outline. Through lack of accurate attention, a contradiction might be detected between the use of the word in those two books, and what is said concerning it in this one (part 4 of Chapter I). To the careful observer, however this contradiction does not exist. It will be seen that what is revealed in all its fullness from the spiritual world to supersensible perception, through intuition, makes itself known in its lowest manifestation in the spirit self, just as the external physical world makes itself known in sensation.

No. 7. On Re-embodiment of the Spirit and Destiny. Concerning the statements in this section of the book, it must be borne in mind that — disregarding for the moment the facts of spiritual science already given in other parts of the book — the attempt is made, by means of thoughtful observation of the course of human life, to gain an idea of the extent to which this human life with its destiny, points to repeated earth-lives. These ideas will, of course, appear questionable to those who regard the customary belief in a single life on earth as the only well-founded one. It should also be borne in mind, however, that **the intention here is to show that the ordinary way of looking at things can never lead to an understanding of the deeper foundations of life. For this reason, other conceptions must be sought that apparently contradict the generally accepted ones.** This search is only hindered by the deliberate refusal to apply the same thoughtful consideration to a course of events belonging to the soul, that is applied to a series of events in the physical world. In thus refusing, no value is attached, for instance, to the fact that **when a stroke of fate falls upon the “I,” the effect in the realm of feeling bears a relation to that produced when the memory meets an experience related to what is remembered.** Anyone who tries to observe how a stroke of fate is really experienced will be able to differentiate between this experience and the assertions to which a point of view that is merely external must necessarily give rise, and through which, of course, every living connection between this stroke of fate and the ego is lost sight of. For such a point of view, the blow appears to be either the result of chance or to have been determined by some external cause. The fact that there are also strokes of fate that, in a certain way, break into a human life for the first time, only showing their results later on, makes the temptation all the greater to generalize on this basis without taking other possibilities into account.

People do not begin to pay heed to these other possibilities until experience of life has brought their imaginative faculty into a direction similar to the one that may be observed in **Goethe's friend, Knebel**, who wrote in a letter, “On close observation it will be seen that **there is a plan in the lives of most people that seems traced out for them, either through their own nature or through the circumstances that affect them.** The conditions of their lives may be ever so varied and changeable, but **taken as a whole, a certain conformity will be apparent in the end.** . . . However secretly it may operate, the hand of a definite destiny, whether moved by an outer cause or by an inner impulse, may be clearly discerned; **even conflicting causes** often move in its direction. **However confused the course of life may be, plan and definite direction are always discernible.**”

It is easy to raise objections to observations of this kind, especially for people who are not willing to **consider the experiences of the soul in which such observation has its origin**. The author of this book, however, believes that in what he has said about repeated earth-lives and destiny, he has accurately drawn the boundary line within which one can form conceptions about the underlying causes shaping human life. He has pointed out the fact that the view to which these ideas lead can only be defined by them in silhouette-like form, that they can only prepare the thoughts for what must be discovered by means of spiritual science. This thought-preparation is an inner work of the soul. If it does not over-estimate itself, if it does not seek to prove but aims merely at being an exercise of the soul, it makes a man impartially open to knowledge that must appear foolish, without such preparation.

No. 8. The subject of the spiritual organs of perception that is only alluded to briefly at the end of this book in the chapter on The Path Of Knowledge, is more fully dealt with in my books, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment* and *Occult Science, an Outline*.

No. 9. It would be incorrect to imagine that there is ceaseless unrest in the spiritual world because “a state of rest, a remaining in one place such as we find in the physical world,” does not exist there. It is true that **where the “archetypes are creative beings,” there is nothing that can be called “rest in one place,” but there is the rest that is of a spiritual kind**, and that is compatible with active mobility. It may be likened to the **restful contentment and bliss of the spirit that is manifest in deeds**, but not in being inactive.

No. 10. One is obliged to use the word “purposes” with regard to the great evolutionary powers of the world, although in so doing occasion is given to the temptation to conceive of these powers simply as one things of human purposes. In the case of such words, which have naturally to be taken from the sphere of the human world, this temptation can be avoided only by learning to perceive in them a new significance and meaning, from which all that they contain of the narrowly limited human element has been eliminated. In place of this a meaning may be imparted to them that is given to such words at those moments in life when a man rises to a certain extent above himself.

No. 11. Further particulars about the “Spiritual Word” are to be found in my *Occult Science, an Outline*.

No. 12. When it is said, here, “Out of the Eternal he can determine the direction for the future,” this is intended to point to the special way in which human soul is constituted during the time between death and a new birth. A stroke of destiny that befalls a person during life in the physical world may seem, from the point of view of that (physical) life, to contain something altogether opposed to the man's own will. In the life between death and rebirth a force, resembling will, rules in the soul that gives to the person the tendency toward experiencing this very blow of fate. The soul sees, as it were, that an imperfection has clung to it from earlier earth-lives

— an imperfection that had its origin in an ugly deed or an ugly thought. **Between death and re-birth, there arises in the soul a will-like impulse to make good this imperfection. The soul, therefore, becomes imbued with the tendency to plunge into a misfortune in the coming earth-life, in order, through enduring it, to bring about equilibrium.** After its birth in the physical body, the soul, when met by some hard fate, has no glimmering of the fact that in the purely spiritual life before birth, the impulse that led to this hard fate has been voluntarily accepted by it. **What, therefore, seems completely unwished for from the point of view of earth-life is willed by the soul itself in the supersensible.** “Out of the Eternal man determines the future for himself.”

No. 13. The second in this book on Thought Forms and the Human Aura is doubtless the one that may most easily lead to misconceptions. It is precisely with regard to these descriptions that antagonistic feelings find the best opportunity for raising objections. It is, indeed, natural to demand, for instance, that the statements of the seer in this domain should be proved by experiments corresponding to the scientific mode of thinking. It may be demanded that a number of people who assert that they are able to see the spiritual of the aura should place themselves in front of other people and allow their auras to work upon them. Then these seers should be asked to say what thoughts and feelings they see as the auras of the people they are observing. If their reports coincide, and if it is found that the persons observed really have had the feelings and thoughts reported by the seers, then one could believe in the existence of the aura. That is certainly thought quite scientifically. The following, however, must be taken into account. The work that the spiritual researcher does in his own soul, through which he acquires the capacity for spiritual vision, has, as its aim, the acquisition of this capacity. **Whether [the seer] is then able in any given case to perceive something in the spiritual world does not depend upon himself, nor, for that matter, does what he perceives. That flows to him as a gift from the spiritual world. He cannot take it by force, but *must wait until it comes to him*.** His intention to bring about the perception has no bearing on the real causes of its happening, but this intention is exactly what modern science demands for the experiment. **The spiritual world, however, will not allow itself to be dictated to.** If the above attempt is to succeed, **it would have to be instituted from the spiritual world. In that world a being would have to have the intention of revealing the thoughts of one or more persons to one or more people who are able to “see.”** These seers would then have to be brought together through a spiritual impulse for their work of observation. In that case their reports would certainly coincide. Paradoxical as all this may appear to the purely scientific mind, it is, nevertheless, true.

Spiritual experiments cannot be undertaken in the same way as those of a physical nature. If the seer, for example, receives the visit of a person who is a stranger to him, he cannot at once undertake to observe the aura of this person, but **he sees the aura when there is occasion in the spiritual world for it to be revealed** to him. These few words are intended merely to draw attention to the misconception in the objection described above. What spiritual science has to do is to point the way by

which a man may come to see the aura, by what means he may himself bring about [reception to] experiences of its reality. Thus the only reply that spiritual science can make to the would-be seer is, "The conditions have been made known; apply them to your own soul, and you will see." It would certainly be more convenient if the above demands of the modern scientific mode of thought could be fulfilled, but whoever asks for tests of this kind shows that he has not made himself acquainted with the very first results of spiritual science.

The statements made in this book about the human aura are **not intended to encourage the desire for supersensible sensation**. This desire only admits itself satisfied with regard to the spiritual world if it is shown something as "spirit" that cannot be distinguished in thought from the physically sensible, so that it can rest comfortably and remain with its conceptions in that same physical sense-world. What is said on part 6 of Chapter III about the way in which the auric color is to be imagined is certainly calculated to prevent such misunderstanding. **Anyone, however, who is striving for true insight into these things must clearly perceive that the human soul, in experiencing the spiritual and psychic, has of necessity before it the spiritual, not the physical-sensible view of the aura. Without this view, the experience remains in the unconscious.** It is a mistake to confuse the pictorial perception with the actual experience itself, but one ought also to make quite clear to oneself that in this same pictorial perception the experience finds a completely true expression; not one, for instance, that the beholding soul creates arbitrarily, but one that takes shape of itself in supersensible perception.

At the present time, a modern scientist would be forgiven should he feel called upon to speak of a kind of human aura such as Prof. Dr. Moritz Benedikt describes in his book on the Rod and Pendulum Theory (*Ruten und Pendellehre*). "There exists, even though in small numbers, human beings who are adapted to the dark. A relatively large fraction of this minority see in the dark many objects without colors, and only relatively few see the objects colored also. . . A considerable number of learned men and physicians have been subjected to research in my dark room by my two classical 'subjects' or 'seers in the dark,' who see colors, see in the front the forehead and scalp blue, and see the rest of the right half likewise blue and the justify red, or some it. . . orange-yellow. To the rear, the same division is found, and the same coloring." The spiritual researcher is not so easily forgiven when he speaks of the aura.

There is no intention here of taking up any kind of attitude toward all that Benedikt has worked out, which belongs to the most interesting modern theories of nature. Neither is it intended to take advantage of a cheap opportunity to make excuses for spiritual science through natural science, which so many enjoy doing. It is only intended to point out how, in one instance, a scientist can be brought to make assertions that are not unlike those of spiritual science. At the same time, it must be emphasized that **the aura that is spoken of in this book, and that can only be grasped spiritually, is something quite different from what can be investigated by physical means** and about which Benedikt speaks. We surrender ourselves to a

gross illusion if we think that the spiritual aura can be one that may be subject to research by the external means of modern science. That aura is only accessible to the spiritual perception reached by the path of knowledge as described in the last chapter of this book. It would also be a mistake to suppose that the truth and reality of what is spiritually perceived can be demonstrated in the same way as can what is perceived through the senses.

An Outline of Esoteric Science **by Rudolf Steiner**

Italicized notes and comments by Stephen D Evans
also emboldened selections [and bracketed alternate phrasings]

http://wn.elib.com/Steiner/Books/GA013/English/AP1972/GA013_index.html

*The early English edition of this work made the title Occult Science. A later translation changed it to Esoteric Science, and rightly so. Readers of later generations would further misunderstand the original meaning of **occult** as “hidden” implying arcane or forbidden and wrongly assume reference to witchcraft or even the black arts. I include here some of Steiner’s own attempts to clarify his intent for contemporaries, almost a century ago. Otherwise, I have also chosen to replace the word occult with esoteric. Other works of Steiner prefer the term “spiritual science” to mean the very same, apprehension of fact beyond the natural realm.*

*This study is especially relevant to the ASP experience, as those who report back are typically unable to designate naturally observable proofs of their continued consciousness during bodily sleep. Only others who have similarly **seen** via ASP can attest to the reality of that fact at least – namely continuity of consciousness. Steiner, of course, maintains that self-consciousness is just the beginning stage of further revelations, all equally verifiable by fellow seers.*

If you are starting with this section, especially if your background involves ASP, I urge you to stop and read first my Introduction to this study. As with my other presentations, the reader may benefit by a quick first-time reading of emboldened phrases and my comments separated in italics. Again, for my own study, redactions and rephrasings are clearly marked. An online original translation is linked at the top of this page for ready comparison.

Preface to the Sixteenth through Twentieth Editions

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Occult science is the science of what occurs occultly insofar as it is **not perceived in external nature**, but in that region toward which the soul turns when it directs its inner being toward the spirit.

Esoteric Science is the antithesis of *Natural Science*.

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My knowledge of things of the spirit is a direct result of my own perception, and I am fully conscious of this fact. In all details and in the larger surveys I had always examined myself carefully as to whether every step I took in the progress of my perception was accompanied by a **fully awake consciousness**. Just as the mathematician advances from thought to thought without the unconscious or autosuggestion playing a role, so — I told myself — spiritual perception must advance from objective imagination to objective imagination without anything living in the soul but **the spiritual content of clear, discerning consciousness**.

The knowledge that an **imagination** is not a mere subjective picture, but a **representation in picture form of an objective spiritual content** is attained by **means of healthy inner experience**. This is achieved in a psycho-spiritual way, just as in the realm of sense-perception one is able with a healthy organism **to distinguish properly between mere imaginings and objective perceptions**. Thus the results of my perception stood before me. They were, at the outset, “perceptions” without names. Were I to communicate them, I needed verbal designations. I then sought later for such designations in older descriptions of the spiritual in order to be able to express in words what was still wordless. I employed these verbal designations freely, so that in my use of them scarcely one coincides with its ancient meaning.

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Preface to the Fourth Edition

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Human cognition, as it acts in everyday life and in ordinary science, is really so constituted that it cannot penetrate into supersensible worlds. This can be irrefutably proved ... [such as when showing] that the natural human eye with its power of perception cannot penetrate into the smallest cells of a living body, or into the constitution of distant celestial bodies.... Why should this proof --that the ordinary power of cognition must halt before supersensible worlds-- decide anything against the possibility of research into these worlds?

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The human power of **cognition can be strengthened and enhanced, just as the faculty of eyesight can be strengthened**. The means, however, for strengthening cognition are of an entirely spiritual nature; they are **purely inner soul functions**. They consist in what is described in this book as meditation and concentration (contemplation). Ordinary soul-life is bound to the instruments of the body, the strengthened soul-life frees itself from them. To certain modern schools of thought such a declaration must appear quite senseless and based only upon self-delusion. From their point of view, it will be found easy to prove that “all soul-life” is bound up with the nervous system. [However] a person holding [a spiritual scientific point of view will comprehend such “proofs” differently]. He understands the people who say this --that only the superficial [researcher] can maintain there may be some sort of soul-life independent of the body. [The modernists] are entirely convinced that for such soul experiences a connection with the life of the nerves exists that this “spiritual scientific amateurishness” fails to perceive.

*What the so-called modern thinker fails to perceive is how that it may be **both** a physiological and spiritual experience. It is reductionist naturalistic thinking which insists without proofs that the human animal nervous system is capable of creating the illusion of consciousness and resultant mental imagery, that this inner life experience merely **seems** for moments to feel independent of a physio-chemical state of being. That purely spiritual states of being might actually originate the shadow processes of physical being, this is inconceivable given that anything said to be spiritual is by definition illusion and therefore unknowable, unscientific. In truth, only a mind closed to the possibility of discovery outside its material comfort zone, only such a bias could find contentment and resolve (or rather, escape) within such a circular argument.*

* * *

I. The Character of Esoteric Science

ESOTERIC science, an ancient term, is used for the contents of this book. This term **can arouse in various individuals** of the present day **feelings of the most contrary character. For many, it possesses something repellent**; it arouses derision, pitying smiles, perhaps contempt. These people imagine that the kind of thinking thus designated can only be based upon idle, fantastic dreaming, that behind such “alleged” science there can lurk only the impulse to renew all sorts of **superstitions that are properly avoided by those who understand “true scientific methods” and “pure intellectual endeavor.”** The effect of this term upon **others [by contrast]** is to think it must bring them something that cannot be acquired in any other way and to which, according to their nature, they **are attracted by a deep, inner longing** for knowledge or by the soul's sublimated

curiosity. In between these sharply contrasting opinions there exists every possible kind of intermediate stage of conditional rejection or acceptance of what this or that person imagines when he hears the term, “esoteric science.” It is not to be denied that for many the term, esoteric science, has a magical sound because it seems **to satisfy their fatal passion for knowledge of an “unknown,” of a mysterious, even of an obscure something that is not to be acquired in a natural way.**

[These] people do not wish to satisfy the deepest longings of their souls by means of something that can be clearly understood. Their convictions lead them to conclude that besides what can be known in the world there must be something that defies cognition. With extraordinary absurdity, which they do not observe, they reject, in regard to the deepest longing for knowledge, all that “is known” and only wish to give their approval to something that cannot be said to be known by means of ordinary research. He who speaks of “esoteric science” will do well to keep in mind the fact that he is confronted by misunderstandings caused by just such defenders of a science of this kind — defenders who are **striving, in fact, not for knowledge, but for its antithesis.**

I included the above discussion because it also describes with striking familiarity the range of attitudes toward a supposed science of paranormal as encountered within the growing community of ASP experiencers. I have stated before, the phenomenon appears to be no respecter of personal backgrounds and belief systems ... except, curiously, as the specter of terror manifests itself. But whatever face worn by this entity, the challenge is the same. One is repeatedly and unmercifully compelled to suspend disbelief, reach beyond all prior presuppositions as to what is possible or impossible, fact or fiction, and find the spiritual fortitude necessary to overcome. That is also how many of us learned to swim –tossed finally by a discompassionate elder into the deep end.

This work is intended for readers who will not permit their impartiality to be taken away from them just because a word may arouse prejudice through various circumstances. It is not here a question of knowledge which, in any respect, can be considered to be “secret” [*esoteric, as in secret sect*] and therefore only accessible to certain people through some special favor of fate. We shall do justice to the use of the term, esoteric science, employed here, if we consider what Goethe has in mind when he speaks of the “revealed secrets” in the phenomena of the universe. What remains “secret” — unrevealed — in these phenomena when grasped only by means of the senses and the intellect bound up with them will be considered as the content of a supersensible mode of knowledge.¹ — What is meant here by **“Esoteric Science” does not constitute science for anyone who only considers “scientific” what is revealed through the senses** and the intellect serving them. If, however, such a person wishes to understand himself, **he must acknowledge that he rejects esoteric science**, not from well-substantiated insight, but **from a**

mandate arising from his own personal feelings. In order to understand this, it is only necessary to consider how science comes into existence and what significance it has in human life.

The origin of science, in its essential nature, is not recognized by means of the subject matter it is dealing with, but by means of **the human soul-activity arising in scientific endeavor**. We must consider the attitude of the soul when it elaborates science. If we acquire the habit of exercising this kind of activity only when we are concerned with the manifestation of the senses, we might easily be led to the opinion that this sense-manifestation is the essential thing. We [are no longer even] aware that [scientific endeavor] has [been restricted] to the [sense world]. (*Indeed, what of those attempting to describe reality on the quantum or far distant astronomical levels, where only effects or indications, rather than the things themselves, are physically observable?*) It is possible, however, to rise above this arbitrary self-limitation and, apart from [specifically sense-bound] application, **consider the [truly essential] characteristics of scientific activity. This is the basis for our designating as “scientific” the knowledge of a non-sensory world-content.** The human power of thought wishes to occupy itself with this *latter* world-content just as it occupies itself, in the other case, with the world-content of natural science. **Esoteric science** desires to free the natural-scientific method and its principle of research from their special application that limits them, in their own sphere, to the relationship and process of sensory facts, but, at the same time, it wants to retain their way of thinking and other characteristics. **It desires to speak about the non-sensory in the same way natural science speaks about the sensory.** Natural science remains within the sense world with its method of research and way of thinking. Esoteric science wishes to employ mental activity **[to train natural faculties of the soul for researching] realms of the non-sensory.** Its method does not speak about the sense phenomena as such, but speaks about the non-sensory world-content in the way the scientist talks about the content of the sensory world. **It retains the mental attitude of the natural-scientific method; that is to say, it holds fast to just the thing that makes natural research a science.** For that reason it may call itself a science.

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The following objection is often heard in regard to the statements of esoteric science: “These [occultists] do not offer proof; they merely assert this or that and say that esoteric science ascertains this.” The following exposition will be misjudged if it is thought that any part of it has been presented in this sense. Our endeavor here is to **allow the capacity of soul unfolded through a knowledge of nature to evolve further**, as far as its own nature will allow. [We then attest] that in [the course of] such development the soul [naturally] encounters supersensible facts. It is assumed that every [able] reader will necessarily **confront these facts as purely natural scientific observations, with one difference**, however, the moment we enter the realm of spiritual science. In natural science, [as phenomena appear to] present themselves in the field of the sense world; the [professor] of natural science

considers the activity of the soul as something that recedes into the background [while endeavoring to understand objectively] the relationships and the course of sensory facts. **The [professor] of spiritual science must place his soul activity into the foreground; for [he only perceives these] facts if he [employs] this activity of the soul [as his primary instrument of research] in the right way.** These facts [do not present themselves] for human perception *without* the activity of the soul — although uncomprehended — [as we discover them] in natural science; they enter into human perception only *by means of* soul activity. **The [professor] of spiritual science therefore presumes that the reader is seeking facts mutually with him.** His exposition will be given in the form of a narration describing how these facts were discovered, and in the manner of his narration not personal caprice but scientific thinking trained by natural science will prevail. **It will also be necessary, therefore, to speak of the means by which a consideration of the non-sensory, of the supersensible, is attained.** — Anyone who occupies himself with an exposition of esoteric science will soon see that through it concepts and ideas are acquired that previously he did not possess. Thus he also acquires new thoughts concerning his previous conception of **the nature of “proof.”** He learns that for an exposition of natural science, “proof” is something that is brought to it, as it were, from without. In spiritual-scientific thinking, however, the activity, which in natural-scientific thinking the soul employs for proof, lies already in the search for facts. These facts cannot be discovered if the path to them is itself not already a proof. **Whoever really travels this path has already experienced the proving in the process: nothing can be accomplished by means of a proof applied from without.** The fact that this is not recognized in the character of esoteric science calls forth many misunderstandings.

The whole of esoteric science must spring from two thoughts that can take root in every human soul. For the esoteric scientist, as he is meant here, **these two thoughts express facts that can be experienced if we use the right means.** For many people these thoughts signify **extremely controversial statements** about which there may be wide differences of opinion; they may even be “proved” to be impossible.

These two thoughts are the following. **First, behind the “visible” there exists an invisible world, concealed** at the outset from the senses and the thinking bound up with the senses; and **second, it is possible for man, through the development of capacities slumbering within him, to penetrate into this hidden world.**

One person maintains that there is no such hidden world, that the world perceived by means of the human senses is the only one, that its riddles can be solved out of itself. Although the human being at present is still far from being able to answer all the questions of existence, [it is believed that] a time will surely come when sense experience and the science based upon it will be able to give the answers.

Others state that we must not maintain there is no hidden world behind the visible, yet the human powers of cognition are unable to penetrate into it. They have limits

that cannot be overstepped. Let those who need “faith” take refuge in a world of that kind: a true science, which is based upon assured facts, cannot concern itself with such a world.

There is a third group that considers it presumptuous if a man, through his cognitive activity, desires to penetrate into a realm about which he [should] renounce all “knowledge” and be content with “faith.” The adherents of this opinion consider it wrong for the weak human being to want to penetrate into a world that is supposed to belong to the religious life alone.

It is also maintained that a common knowledge of the facts of the sense world is possible for everyone. [Regarding] supersensible facts [however, they say] it is only a matter of the personal opinion of the individual, and that no one should speak of a generally valid certainty in these matters.

It can become clear that the **observation of the visible world presents riddles that can never be solved out of the facts of that world [in] themselves.** They will never be solved in this way, although the science concerned with these facts may have advanced as far as is possible. **For the visible facts, through their very inner nature, point clearly to a hidden world.** Whoever does not discern this closes his mind to the riddles that spring up everywhere out of the facts of the sense world. He *refuses* to perceive certain questions and riddles; he, therefore, thinks that all questions may be answered by means of the sensory facts. The questions he *wishes* to propound can indeed *all* be answered by means of the facts that he expects will be discovered in the future. This may be readily admitted. But why should a person wait for answers to certain things who does not ask any questions? Whoever strives for an esoteric science merely says that for him these questions are self-evident and that they must be recognized as a fully justified expression of the human soul. **Science cannot be pressed into limits by forbidding the human being to ask unbiased questions.**

This opinion, that there are insurmountable limits to human cognition ... compelling man to stop short before an invisible world, must be replied to by saying that there can be no doubt about the impossibility of finding access to the invisible world [using sense-bound] cognition. Whoever considers that form of cognition to be the only possible one cannot come to any other opinion-- that the human being is denied access to [any higher world that may possibly exist]. Yet the following may also be stated. **If it is possible to develop *another* kind of cognition, *this* then may well lead into the supersensible world.** If this kind of cognition is considered to be impossible, then we reach a point of view from which all talk about a supersensible world appears as pure nonsense. From an impartial viewpoint, however, the only reason for such an opinion can be the fact that the person holding it has no knowledge of this other kind of cognition. Yet how can a person pass judgment upon something about which he himself admits his ignorance? Unprejudiced thinking must hold to the premise that a person should

speaking only of what he *knows* and should not make statements about something he does *not* know. Such thinking can only speak of the right that a person has to communicate what he himself has experienced, but it cannot speak of the right that somebody declare impossible what he does not know or does not wish to know. **We cannot deny anyone the right to ignore the supersensible, but there can never be any good reason for him to declare himself an authority, not only on what he himself can know, but also on all that a man can *not* know.**

* * *

At the proper moment, every human being can find the way to esoteric science who recognizes, [or merely intuitively from observation of the manifest world], the existence of a hidden world. Out of this consciousness, that powers of cognition are capable of development, he is driven to the feeling that the concealed is able to reveal itself to him. To a person who has been so led to esoteric science ... there [indeed] opens up the prospect of [satisfying] his craving for knowledge, but also the quite different prospect of becoming victor over all that hampers and weakens life. It signifies, in a certain higher sense, a weakening of life [itself], indeed a death of the soul, when a human being sees himself forced to turn away from the supersensible, to deny it. **Indeed, under certain conditions it leads to despair when a man loses hope of having the hidden revealed to him.** This death and despair in their manifold forms are, at the same time, inner soul opponents of esoteric-scientific striving. They appear when the inner force of the human being dwindles. Then all force of life must be introduced from [outside the soul] if such a person is to get possession of any life force at all. He then perceives the things, beings, and events that appear before his senses; he analyses these with his intellect. They give him pleasure and pain, they [motivate] him to [accomplish as much as he can], and he may carry on in this way for a while. Yet ... he must reach a point when **he inwardly dies, for what [soul sustenance] can be drawn from the [external] world in this way becomes exhausted, [like a well run dry].** This is not a statement derived from the personal experience of one individual, but the result of an unbiased consideration of all human life. **What guards against this exhaustion is the concealed something that rests within the depths of things, [the esoteric].** [And] the power to descend into these depths in order to draw up [renewable] life-force, if that dies away within the human being, then finally also the [outside sensory resource] no longer proves conducive to life.

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In the spirit and true sense of the word, no real scientist will be able to find a contradiction between his science built upon the facts of the sense world and the method by which the supersensible world is investigated. **The scientist makes use of certain instruments and methods, [to extend himself and the powers of his external senses].** He produces his instruments [technologically to transform -- amplify and clarify--] what "nature" offers him. **The supersensible method of knowledge also makes use of an instrument.** This instrument is [again] man

himself [by virtue of internal senses]. This instrument, too, must first be made ready for higher research. The **[internal] capacities and forces given to man [also] by nature**, [though without man's technological assistance], must [yet] be **transformed into higher capacities** and powers. Man is **thereby able to make himself the instrument for research in the supersensible world**.

Footnotes:

1. It has happened that the term "occult science," as used by the author in earlier editions of this book, has been rejected for the reason that a science cannot be "something hidden." That would be correct if the matter were meant in this way. But such is not the case. The science of nature cannot be called a "natural" science in the sense that it belongs by "nature" to everyone, nor does the author consider occult science as a "hidden" science, but one that has to do with the unrevealed, the concealed, in the phenomena of the world for ordinary methods of cognition. It is a science of the "mysteries," of the "revealed secrets." This science, however, should not be a secret for anyone who seeks knowledge of it by the proper methods.

II. The Essential Nature of Mankind

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[I]n esoteric science **man presents himself as a being composed of various members** [a tri-unity of body, soul and spirit]:

1. **Those of a corporeal nature** [with bodily senses and processes] are **the physical body, the etheric body** [providing life, form and healing to the material body], **and the astral body** [first experienced as a dream body, imagination or window of the soul].
2. **Those belonging to the soul** are **sentience** [emotions and lower desires], **intelligence** [powers of reason and higher desires], **and consciousness** [akin to dim animal self-consciousness: preferences and intentions].
3. **The I, the Ego** [being an even higher distinctly human individuality, source of highest spiritual principles and aspirations], spreads out its light within the soul. **The members possessing a spiritual nature** are Spirit Self [the primal godlike individuality], Life Spirit [the redeemed transformed soul], and Spirit Man [the incorruptible body or window of the Spirit].

The human body is also described by Steiner as fourfold: material body, etheric or immaterial body, astral or 'soul' body, and the I or Spirit. This is essential to discussion of mankind's place in time and Earth's spiritual development thus far as the 'womb' of man's corporeal being (so we appropriately refer to her as Mother Earth). The fourfold presentation of man also clarifies human nature is distinct from animals on the material side (whose evolution stalled short of the human ego) and from other immaterial entities on the spiritual side of

creation. Our first four weekdays are named in memory of the beginning four cycles of man's earthly embodiment: Saturn-day, Sunday, Moon-day and fourthly Tuesday –that is Tys-day or the sky-god's day-- meaning the present Earth cycle where the son of God descends into Earth's sheath as a son of man, a peace-offering and guarantor of God's covenant to rescue mankind from death, to become Earth's sky as life-preserving atmosphere, champion against the beastly demise of man; and so Spirit as well as Soul has incarnated in man's physical Body. (This also reflects how earth is uniquely a combined gas, liquid and solid planet, referred in the Genesis account of Creation as the "firmaments" between all three states of matter where all physical life forms flourish). The Norse and Roman legends (Tys and Mars) are dream-memories of spiritual fact as observed by spiritual scientists. Read the succeeding chapters of this book for more development of these themes by Steiner himself.

[T]he sentient soul and the astral body are closely united and in a certain respect [function as] a whole. In a similar manner, consciousness soul and Spirit Self are a whole, for the spirit flashes up within the consciousness soul and from there rays through the other members of human nature. With this in mind ... we may combine astral body and sentient soul into a single member. Likewise join consciousness soul and spirit self. And the intellectual soul we may [also associate with] the I, since it partakes of the Ego nature ... [even] though not yet become conscious of its spiritual nature.

[Therefore] we have [ultimately] seven members of man:

1. physical body,
2. ether or life body,
3. astral [or sentient] body,
4. the I [first distinguished as the higher intellect],
5. Spirit Self [echoed by lower self-consciousness],
6. Life Spirit, and
7. Spirit Man.

III. Sleep and Death

IT IS NOT possible to penetrate into the nature of waking consciousness without **observing the state through which the human being passes during sleep**, and it is impossible to solve the riddle of life without considering death. For a human being in whom there is no feeling for the significance of supersensible knowledge, doubts may arise in regard to such knowledge because of the way in which it carries on its considerations regarding sleep and death.... It must, in fact, be acknowledged without question that a consideration of what lies concealed in sleep and death is unhealthy if it leads to a weakening, to an estrangement from real life. And we

must admit that much that has called itself esoteric science in the world from time immemorial, and is practiced also today under that name, bears a character unhealthy and hostile to life. But this unsound element does not spring from *true* supersensible knowledge. On the contrary, the real fact is the following. Just as man cannot always be awake, he also cannot, in regard to the real conditions of life in its widest sense, get along without what the supersensible is able to offer. **Life continues during sleep, and the forces that are active and creative during the waking state receive their strength and renewal from what is given to them by sleep.** Thus it is with what can be observed in the manifest world. The domain of the world is greater than the field of *this* observation, and what is known about the visible universe must be supplemented and fructified by what can be known about the invisible. **A human being who does not continually draw strength for his weakened forces from sleep must of necessity destroy his life. Likewise, a world concept that is not fructified by a knowledge of the hidden world must lead to desolation.** It is similar with death. Living beings succumb to death in order that new life may arise. It is precisely the knowledge of the supersensible that can shed clear light upon the beautiful words of Goethe: "Nature has invented death that she might have abundant life." Just as there could be no life in the ordinary sense of the word without death, so can there be no true knowledge of the visible world without insight into the supersensible. All knowledge of what is visible must plunge again and again into the invisible in order to evolve. Thus it is evident that the science of the supersensible alone makes the life of revealed knowledge possible. It never weakens life when it appears in its true form. **When, having been left to itself, life becomes weak and sickly, supersensible knowledge strengthens it and makes it, ever and again, fresh and healthy.**

When man sinks into sleep, there is a change in the relationship of his members. That part of the sleeping man that lies in bed contains the physical and ether bodies, but not the astral body and not the ego. Because the ether body remains united with the physical body in sleep, the life-activities continue; for, the moment the physical body were left to itself, it would have to crumble to dust. What, however, is extinguished in sleep includes the **mental images, pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, the capacity to express a conscious will**, and similar facts of existence. **The astral body is the bearer of all this.** An unbiased point of view can naturally never entertain the thought that in sleep the astral body is destroyed along with all pleasure and pain and the world of ideas and will. It simply exists in another state. **In order that the human ego and astral body not only be filled with joy and sorrow and all the other facts of existence mentioned above, but also have a conscious perception of them, it is necessary that the astral body be united with the physical and ether bodies. In the waking state, all three are united; in the sleeping state, the astral body withdraws from the physical and ether bodies. It assumes a different kind of existence from the one that falls to its lot during its union with the physical and ether bodies. It is the task of supersensible knowledge to consider this other kind of existence in the astral body. Observed from the standpoint of the outer world, the astral body disappears in sleep; supersensible perception must follow its life until it again**

takes possession of the physical and ether bodies on awakening. Just as in all cases where it is a matter of knowledge of the hidden things and events of the world, so supersensible observation is necessary for the discovery of the facts of the sleeping state in their particular form. If, **however**, what can be discovered by means of supersensible observation has once been uttered, it is comprehensible to truly unbiased thinking, for **the processes of the hidden world reveal themselves in their effects in the manifest world.** If it is seen how the revelations of supersensible perception make the sensory processes comprehensible, **such a corroboration by means of life itself is the proof that can be required for such things.** Anyone not desiring to employ the means for acquiring supersensible perception, indicated later on in this book, can have the following experience. He may at first accept the evidence of supersensible perception and then apply it to the manifest facts of his experience. He may, in this way, find that life has thereby become clear and comprehensible, and the more exact and thorough his observations of ordinary life are, the more readily will he come to this conviction.

Although the astral body, during sleep, experiences no mental pictures and also no pleasure and pain, it does not remain inactive. On the contrary, it is just in the sleep state that a lively activity is incumbent upon it. It is an activity into which it must again and again enter in rhythmical succession, if it has been for a time active in connection with the physical and ether bodies. Just as the pendulum of a clock ... must swing to the right because of the momentum gathered in its left swing --so the astral body and the ego living within (after having been active for a time in the physical and ether bodies) must unfold a [resulting] subsequent activity, **body-free, in a surrounding world of soul and spirit.** [Ordinarily], **unconsciousness occurs** during this body-free condition of the astral body and ego **because it presents the antithesis of the state of consciousness developed in the waking state** through union with the physical and ether bodies – [again] **just as the swing of the pendulum** to the right is the antithesis of the swing to the left. **The necessity of entering into this state of unconsciousness is experienced by the soul-spirit nature of man as fatigue.** But this fatigue is the expression of the fact that the astral body and ego, during sleep, prepare themselves to transform what [had arisen during waking hours] in the physical and ether bodies through purely organic formative activity.... This unconscious formative activity and [conversely] what takes place in the human being during and by means of consciousness are antitheses that must alternate in rhythmic succession. — The physical body can retain the form and stature suitable for man only by means of the human ether body, which in turn receives its proper forces from the astral body. **The ether body is the builder, the architect, of the physical body, but it can only build in the right way if it receives the impulse for this purpose from the astral body.** In the astral body reside **the prototypes according to which the ether body gives form** to the physical body. During the waking state, the astral body is not filled with these prototypes of the physical body, or at least only to a certain degree, for, **during the waking state, the soul puts its own images in the place of these prototypes.** When man directs the senses toward his environment he forms, by means of perception, thought images that are likenesses of the world about him.

These likenesses are at first disturbances for the images that stimulate the ether body to maintain the physical body. Were the human being able, through his own activity, to bring to his astral body the images that are required to give the right impulse to the ether body, then there would be no such disturbance. **This very disturbance, however, plays an important role in human existence.** It expresses itself **in the fact that the prototypes for the ether body do not act to the full extent of their power during waking life.** The astral body carries on its waking activity within the physical body. **In sleep, it works upon the physical body from without [from within its own world].**

For example, **just as the physical body needs the outer world, which is of like nature to itself, to supply it with the means of subsistence, something similar is also the case with the astral body.** Just imagine a physical human body removed from its surrounding world. It would have to perish. This demonstrates that without the whole physical environment it is not possible for the physical body to exist. In fact, the entire earth must be as it is, if human physical bodies are to exist upon it. **The whole human body is, in reality, only a part of the earth; indeed, in a wider sense, a part of the whole physical universe.** In this respect its relationship is similar, for example, to that of a finger to the entire human body. If the finger is severed from the hand, it can no longer continue to be a finger; it withers. This would also happen to the human body were it removed from the organism of which it is a member, from the life conditions offered it by the earth. If we were to lift it a sufficient number of miles above the earth's surface, it **would perish just as the finger perishes that has been severed from the hand....**

Just as the physical body belongs to the physical world in which it is embedded, **so does the astral body belong to its own world; during waking life, however, it is torn out of this world of its own.** What happens there may be illustrated by an analogy. Imagine a vessel filled with water. A drop within this whole mass of water is not something isolated. Let us, however, take a little sponge and with it absorb a drop from the whole. Something similar occurs with the human astral body on awaking. During sleep it is in a world like itself; in a certain sense it constitutes something that belongs to this world. On awaking, the physical and ether bodies suck it up; they fill themselves with it. They contain the organs through which the astral body perceives the outer world. But in order that it may acquire this perception, it must separate itself from its own world. From this world it can only receive the prototypes that it needs for the ether body. — **Just as the physical body receives its food, for example, from its environment, so during the sleep state the astral body receives the images from the world about it. It lives there actually in the universe, separated from the physical and ether bodies, in the same universe out of which the entire human being is born. The source of the images through which the human being receives his form lies in this universe.** During sleep he is harmoniously inserted into it, and during the waking state he lifts himself out of this all-encompassing harmony in order to gain external perception. In sleep, his astral body returns to this cosmic harmony and on awaking again brings back to his bodies sufficient strength from it to enable him to dispense with

his dwelling within the cosmic harmony for a certain length of time. **The astral body, during sleep, returns to its home and on awaking brings back with it renewed forces into life. These forces that the astral body brings with it on awaking find outer expression in the refreshment that healthy sleep affords.** Further descriptions of esoteric science will show that **this home of the astral body is more encompassing than that which belongs to the physical body** of the physical environment in the narrower sense. Whereas the human being is physically a part of the earth, his astral body belongs to worlds in which still other cosmic bodies besides our earth are embedded. Therefore he enters, during sleep, **into a world to which other worlds than the earth belong**, a fact that will only become clear from later descriptions.

It ought to be superfluous to call attention to a misunderstanding that can easily arise in regard to these facts, but to do so is not out of place in our age in which **certain materialistic modes of thought are prevalent**. Those who hold such thoughts can naturally say **that it is only scientific to investigate the physical conditions of such a thing as sleep**. They maintain that although scholars are not yet in agreement concerning the physical causes of sleep, yet one fact is certain: that **definite physical processes must be assumed** as lying at the foundation of this phenomenon. Oh! if people would only acknowledge the fact that **supersensible knowledge in no way contradicts this assertion!** It agrees with everything that is said from this point of view just as one agrees that in the physical erection of a house one brick must be laid upon another, and when it is finished, its form and cohesion can be explained by purely mechanical laws. In order that the house may be built at all, however, the thought of the builder is necessary. This thought is not to be discovered when merely the physical laws are investigated. — Thus, **just as the thoughts of the builder of the house lie behind the physical laws that make the house comprehensible, so behind what physical science presents in an absolutely correct way lies the spiritual** content of which supersensible knowledge speaks....

Dreaming is an intermediate state between waking and sleeping. What dream experiences offer to thoughtful consideration is a multi-colored interweaving of a picture world that conceals within it certain rules and laws. **This world of dreams seems to display an ebb and flow, often in confused succession.** In his dream life, **the human being is freed from the law of waking consciousness that fetters him to sense-perception and to the rules governing his power of reason.** Yet dreams have certain mysterious laws that are fascinating and alluring to man's prescience, and that are the deeper reason why the beautiful play of fantasy underlying artistic feeling is readily likened to "dreaming." It is only necessary to call to mind certain characteristic dreams to find this corroborated. Someone dreams, for example, that he drives away a dog that is rushing upon him. He awakens and finds himself in the act of unconsciously throwing off a part of the bedclothes that had pressed upon an unaccustomed part of his body and had, therefore, become burdensome. What does dreaming here make out of the sense-perceptible process? What the senses would perceive in the waking state, the life of sleep allows to remain in complete

unconsciousness. It retains, however, something essential, namely the fact that the sleeping person wishes to *ward off* something. Around this fact **sleep weaves a pictorial process. The images, as such, are echoes of waking-day life. The manner in which they are borrowed from it has something arbitrary about it.** Every person has the feeling that under the same external provocation, the dream could conjure up different pictures in his soul, but they express symbolically the feeling that the person has something he wishes to ward off. **Dreams create symbols; they are symbol-makers. Inner processes, too, can transform themselves into such dream symbols.** A person dreams that a fire is crackling near him; in his dream he sees the flames. He awakens and finds that he has been too heavily covered and has become too warm. The feeling of too much warmth is symbolically expressed in the dream picture. **Quite dramatic experiences can be enacted** in dream. For example, a person dreams that he is standing at an abyss. He sees a child running toward it. In his dream he experiences all the agony of the thought: Oh! if the child would only take heed, would only pay attention and not fall into the abyss! He sees it falling and hears the dull thud of its body below. He awakens and becomes aware that an object hanging on the wall of his room had become loosened and, in falling, has made a dull sound. Dream life expresses this **simple occurrence in an event that is enacted in exciting pictures.** — For the present we do not need to enter into a consideration of why, in the last example, the moment of the dull thud of the falling object should spread out into a series of events that seem to extend over a certain period of time. We need only **keep in mind how the dream transforms into a picture what sense-perception would offer were we awake.**

We see that as soon as the senses cease their activity, something creative asserts itself in man. This is the same creative element that is also present in completely dreamless sleep and there presents the soul state that appears as the antithesis of the soul's waking state. **If this dreamless sleep is to take place, the astral body must be withdrawn from the ether and physical bodies. During the dream state, it is separated from the physical body in so far as it no longer has any connection with this body's sense organs, but it still retains a certain connection with the ether body.** That the processes of the astral body can be perceived in pictures is due to this connection with the ether body. **The moment this connection ceases, the pictures sink down into the darkness of unconsciousness, and we have dreamless sleep.** The arbitrary and often absurd character of dream pictures rests upon the fact that the astral body, because of its separation from the sense organs of the physical body, cannot relate its pictures to the proper objects and events of the external environment. This fact becomes especially clear if we consider a dream in which the ego is, as it were, split up; when, for example, a person dreams that, as a pupil, he cannot answer a question put to him by his teacher, while directly afterwards the teacher, himself, answers the question. Because the dreamer cannot make use of the organs of perception of his physical body he is unable to relate the two occurrences to himself, as the same individual. Thus, **in order to recognize himself as an enduring ego, he must be equipped with the external organs of perception. Only if a person had acquired**

the capacity of becoming conscious of his ego otherwise than through these organs of [physical] perception, would the enduring ego become perceptible to him outside his physical body. Supersensible consciousness must acquire these capacities, and the means of accomplishing this will be considered later on in this book.

Even death occurs only because there is a change in the relationship of the members of man's being. What supersensible perception has to say about death can also be observed in its effects in the outer world. [Using] unbiased reason, the communications of supersensible knowledge can be verified on this point also through observation of [people's] external life. The expression of the invisible within the visible is, however, less obvious in these facts....

In passing over into sleep, the astral body only severs its connection with the ether and physical bodies, the latter remaining bound together; **in death, the physical body, however, is severed from the ether body.** The physical body is left to its own forces and must, for that reason, disintegrate as a corpse. When death occurs, *the ether body enters into a state that it never experienced during the time between birth and death, except under rare conditions* that will be spoken of later. It is now united with its astral body, without the presence of the physical body, for the ether body and astral body do not separate immediately after death. For a time they remain together by means of a force whose existence is easily to be understood. If it did not exist, the ether body could not sever itself from the physical body, for it is bound to it. This is seen **in sleep** when **the astral body is unable to tear these two members of the human organism apart.** This force begins its activity **at death.** It severs the ether body from the physical, with the result that **the ether body is now united with the astral body.** Supersensible observation shows that **after death this union varies in different people. Its duration is measured by days.** For the present this duration is only mentioned by way of information. — **Later the astral body separates from its ether body also** and continues on its way bereft of it. **During the union of the two bodies man is in a condition that enables him to perceive the experiences of his astral body.** As long as the physical body is present, the work of refreshing the worn out organs must begin from outside the moment the astral body is severed from it. With the severance of the physical body this work ceases. The force that is employed for this work when the human being sleeps remains after death and can now be used to make the astral body's own processes perceptible.

* * *

During the union of the human being with his physical body, the outer world enters his consciousness in images. **After casting off this [material] body, what the astral body experiences when not bound to the outer world by ... physical sense organs becomes perceptible.** It has at first no new experiences. **Union with the ether body prevents it from experiencing anything new. What it does possess,**

however, is a memory of the past life. The still present ether body allows this memory to appear as a comprehensive, living picture. **This is the first experience of the human being after death.** He perceives the life between birth and death in a series of *pictures* spread out before him. During physical life, memory exists only during the waking state when man is united with his physical body. Memory is present only to the [limited] extent allowed by this body. Nothing is lost to the soul that makes an impression upon it during life. **Were the physical body a perfect instrument for this, it would be possible at every moment of life to conjure up before the soul the whole of life's past. This hindrance disappears at death.** As long as the human being retains the ether body, a certain perfection of memory exists, and it disappears to the degree that the ether body loses the form it had during its sojourn in the physical body, when it resembled the physical body. This is also the reason why the astral body after a time separates from the ether body. It can remain united with the latter only as long as the ether form, which corresponds to the physical body, endures.

During life between birth and death, a separation of the ether body from the physical body takes place only in exceptional cases, and then only for a short time. If, for example, a person presses heavily upon one of his limbs, a part of the ether body may separate from the physical. When this occurs we may say that the limb has “gone to sleep.” The peculiar feeling one has at that time comes from the severance of the ether body. (Naturally, here also a materialistic mode of thought may deny the existence of the invisible within the visible and say that all this simply comes from the physical disturbance caused by the pressure.) In such a case, supersensible perception is able to observe how the corresponding part of the ether body passes out of the physical. **If a person experiences an unusual shock, or something of the kind, a separation of the ether body from a large part of the physical body may result for a short time.** This happens if a person for one reason or another **sees himself suddenly near death**; if, for example, he is on the verge of drowning, or if, on a mountaineering trip, he is in danger of a precipitous fall. **What is told by people who have experienced such things comes very near the truth and may be corroborated by supersensible observation. They state that in such moments their entire life passed before the soul in a great memory-picture....** Others [may] describe differently the pictures experienced under similar circumstances... for the pictures that occur in [exceptional cases] are often not readily explicable in regard to their relation to life. Proper consideration [later] will always recognize this relationship. Neither is it an objection if someone, for example, once came near drowning and did not have the experience described. It must be remembered that **this can only occur when the ether body is actually separated from the physical and at the same time remains united with the astral body. If through the shock a loosening of the ether and astral bodies also takes place, then the experience does not occur, because there exists complete unconsciousness, as in dreamless sleep.**

I retained the above reference to the near-death-experience because of its obvious pertinence to multiplied NDE accounts in recent decades, also its similarity to the ASP experience.

In the period immediately following death the experiences of the past appear summarized in a memory-picture. After the separation of the ether body and the astral body, the latter is left to itself in its further journey. It is not difficult to see that, within the astral body, everything remains that it has made its own through its own activity during its sojourn in the physical body. To a certain degree, the ego has developed Spirit Self, Life Spirit, and Spirit Man. As far as they are developed, they receive their existence, not from what exists as organs in the bodies, but from the ego. **The ego is the very member that needs no external organs for self-perception; it also needs none in order to remain in possession of what it has united with itself.** The objection can be made, “Why, then, is there **no perception in sleep** of this [so-called] Spirit Self, Life Spirit, and Spirit Man, which have been developed?” There is none, **because the ego is fettered to the physical body between birth and death.** Even though in sleep the ego, united with the astral body, is outside the physical body, it remains, nevertheless, in close union with the latter, for the activity of the astral body [is still] directed toward this physical body. Thus the ego with its perception is relegated to the external sense world and cannot therefore receive the revelations of the spirit in its direct form. Only at death does the ego receive these revelations because, **at death, the ego is freed from its connection with the physical and ether bodies. Another world can flash up for the soul** the moment it is withdrawn from the physical world that chains the soul's activity to itself during life.

Note in the following discussion the significance of human self-consciousness. Evangelical Christians recognize this propensity for self-consciousness to degenerate into anti-freedom of self-indulgence. We call it the ‘sin nature’. Others may call it psycho-addiction. Just as our god-like human selfhood distinguishes us from animals, so our tendency to fall into self-consuming entrapments proves how we may no longer plead the sensual/spiritual innocence characterizing the animal kingdom. The problem or ‘sin’ lies in our ability as self-conscious spirits to divorce sensual appetite from its spiritual purport, a separation from Reality, effectively stranding our souls in dependence upon the material environment. It is a vain effort to preserve one’s own self-defined, though depraved, purpose and thus forfeiting connection with real enduring self-hood, ultimately naked desire consuming one’s Self. The word religion means to ‘bind back’, an attempt to rediscover that lost connection with spiritual reality. Fortunately there is hope promised: a cure, a rescue.

There are reasons why **even at this moment all connections between man and the external sense world do not cease. Certain desires remain** that maintain this connection. These are **desires that the human being creates because he is conscious of his ego**, the fourth member of his being. Those desires and wishes arising out of the nature of the three lower bodies can only be active within the external world, and when these bodies are laid aside the desires cease. Hunger is caused by the external body; it is silenced as soon as this outer body is no longer united with the ego. If the ego possessed no other desires than those arising from its own spiritual nature, it could at death draw complete satisfaction from the spiritual world into which it is translated. But life has given it still other desires. It has **enkindled in the ego a longing for enjoyments that can only be satisfied through physical organs**, although the desires do not have their origin in these organs themselves. Not only do the three bodies demand their satisfaction through the physical world, but the ego itself finds enjoyments within this world **for which the spiritual world offers no means of satisfaction**. For the ego there are **two kinds of desires in life: the desires that have their source in the bodies**, and therefore must be satisfied within these bodies, **ceasing with the disintegration of these bodies, and the desires that have their source in the spiritual nature of the ego**. As long as the ego is within the bodies, these desires also are satisfied by means of bodily organs, for in the manifestations of the bodily organs the hidden spirit is at work, and **in all that the senses perceive they receive at the same time something spiritual**. This spiritual element exists also after death, although in another form. **All spiritual desires of the ego within the sense world exist also when the senses are no longer present**. If a third kind of desire were not added to these two, death would signify merely a transition from desires that can be satisfied by means of the senses to those that find their realization in the revelation of the spiritual world. This **third type of desire is produced by the ego during its life in the sense world because it finds pleasure in this world also in so far as there is no spirit manifest in it**. — The basest enjoyments can be a manifestation of the spirit. The gratification that the hungry being experiences in taking food is a manifestation of spirit because through the eating of food something is brought about without which, in a certain sense, the spirit could not evolve. The ego can, however, transcend the enjoyment that this fact of necessity offers. It may long for good tasting food, quite apart from the service rendered the spirit by eating. The same is true of other things in the sense world. **Desires are created thereby that would never have come into being in the sense world had the human ego not been incorporated in it. But neither do these desires spring from the spiritual nature of the ego**. The ego *must* have sense enjoyments as long as it lives in the body, also in so far as it is spiritual. The spirit manifests in the sense world and the ego enjoys nothing but spirit when, in this world, it surrenders itself to that medium through which the light of the spirit radiates. It will continue to enjoy this light even when the sense world is no longer the medium through which the rays of the spirit pass. In the spirit world, however, there is no gratification for desires in which the spirit has not already manifested itself in the sense world. **When death takes place, the possibility for the gratification of these desires is cut off**. The enjoyment of appetizing food can come only through the physical organs that are used for taking

in food: the palate, tongue, and so forth. After throwing off the physical body man no longer possesses these organs. But if the ego still has a longing for these pleasures, **this longing must remain ungratified**. In so far as this enjoyment is in accord with the spirit, it exists only as long as the physical organs are present. **If it has been produced by the ego, without serving the spirit, it continues after death as desire, which thirsts in vain for satisfaction**. We can only form an idea of what now takes place in the human being if we think of a person suffering from **burning thirst in a region in which water is nowhere** to be found. This, then, is the state of the ego, in so far as it harbors, after death, the **unextinguished desires for the pleasures of the outer world and has no organs with which to satisfy** them. Naturally, we must imagine the burning thirst that serves as an analogy for the conditions of the ego after death to be increased immeasurably, and imagine it spread out over all the other still existing desires for which *all possibility* of satisfaction is lacking.

The next task of the ego consists in freeing itself from this bond of attraction to the outer world. In this respect the ego has **to bring about a purification and emancipation within itself**. **All desires that have been created by it within the body and that have no inherent rights within the spiritual world must be rooted out**. — Just as an object takes fire and is consumed, so is the world of desires, described above, consumed and destroyed after death. This affords us a glimpse into the world that supersensible knowledge designates as **the “consuming fire of the spirit.”** **All desires of a sensual nature, in which the sensual is *not* an expression of the spirit, are seized upon by this “fire.”** The ideas that supersensible knowledge must give in regard to these processes might be found to be hopeless and awful. It might appear terrifying that a hope, for whose realization sense organs are necessary, must change into hopelessness after death; that a **desire, which only the physical world can satisfy, must turn into consuming deprivation**. Such a point of view is possible only as long as one does not consider the fact that all wishes and desires, which after death are seized by the “consuming fire,” **in a higher sense represent not beneficial but destroying forces in life**. By means of such destructive forces, **the ego tightens the bond with the sense world more strongly than is necessary in order to absorb from this very sense world what is beneficial** to it. This sense world is a manifestation of the spirit hidden behind it. The ego would never be able to enjoy the spirit in the form in which it is able to manifest through bodily senses alone, did it not want to use these senses for the enjoyment of the spiritual within the sense world. Yet **the ego deprives itself of the true spiritual reality in the world to the degree that it desires the sense world without the spirit**. If the enjoyment of the senses, as an expression of the spirit, signifies an elevation and development of the ego, then **an enjoyment that is not an expression of the spirit signifies the impoverishing, the desolation of the ego**. If a desire of this kind is satisfied in the sense world, its desolating effect upon the ego nevertheless remains. Before death, however, this destructive effect upon the ego is not apparent. Therefore the satisfaction of such desires can produce similar desires **during life, and man is not at all aware that he is enveloping himself, through himself, in a “consuming fire.”** After death, what has

surrounded him in life becomes visible, and by becoming visible it appears in its healing, beneficial consequences. **A person who loves another is certainly not attracted only to that in him which can be experienced through the physical organs.** But only [the physical experience itself is] withdrawn from perception at death, [while the spiritual] part of the loved one [first perceivable *by means of the physical* organs starts to become] visible... Moreover, **the only thing that then hinders that [spiritual] part from becoming completely visible is the presence of the desire that can only be satisfied through physical organs. If this desire were not extirpated, the conscious perception of the beloved person could not arise after death.** Considered in this way, the picture of frightfulness and despair that might arise in the human being concerning the events after death, as depicted by supersensible knowledge, must change into one of deep satisfaction and consolation.

The first experiences after death are different in still another respect from those during life. **During the time of purification man, as it were, lives his life in reverse order.** He passes again [a second time] through all that he has experienced in life since his birth. He begins with the events that immediately preceded death and experiences everything in reverse order back to childhood. During this process, **everything that has not arisen out of the spiritual nature of the ego during life passes spiritually before his eyes, only he experiences all this now inversely.** For example, a person who died in his sixtieth year and who in his fortieth year had done someone a bodily or soul injury in an outburst of anger --he will experience this event again, in passing through his life's journey in reverse order after death, when he reaches the place of his fortieth year. He now experiences, **not the satisfaction he had** in life from his attack upon the other person, however, **but the pain he gave** him. From what has been said above, it is at the same time also possible to see that only that part of such an event can be experienced painfully after death that has arisen from passions of the ego having their source only in the outer physical world. **In reality, the ego not only damages the other person through the gratification of such a passion, but itself as well;** only the damage to itself is not apparent to it during life. **After death this whole, damaging world of passion becomes perceptible to the ego. The ego then feels itself drawn to every being and every thing that has enkindled such a passion, in order that this passion may again be destroyed in the "consuming fire" in the same way it was created.** Only when man in his backward journey has reached the point of his birth have all the passions of this kind passed through the fire of purification, and, from then on, nothing hinders him from a complete surrender to the spiritual world. He enters upon a new stage of existence. Just as, at death, he threw off the physical body, then, soon after, the ether body, so now **that part of the astral body falls away that can live only in the consciousness of the outer physical world.** For supersensible perception there are, **thus, three corpses: the physical, the etheric, and the astral** corpse. The point of time when the [astral] is thrown off by man is at the end of **the period of purification, which lasts about a third of the time that passed between birth and death.** The reason why this is so can only become clear later on, when we shall consider the course of human life from the standpoint of

esoteric science. For supersensible observation, **astral corpses are constantly present in the environment of man**, which have been discarded by human beings who are passing over from the state of purification into a higher existence, just as for physical perception there are physical corpses in the world in which men dwell.

The following description of bodiless self-consciousness will appear most familiar to many ASP experiencers. Also note my Introduction reference to drug trips and ergot poisoning.

After purification an entirely new state of consciousness begins for the ego. While before death the outer perceptions had to flow toward the ego in order that the light of consciousness might fall upon them, **now, as it were, a world flows from within** of which it acquires consciousness. The ego lives in this world also between birth and death, [where, however,] this [inner] world is clothed in the manifestations of the senses. [It is only in death where --when all sense perceptions cease-- **the ego is enabled to] perceive itself [unveiled by the sense world] in its innermost sanctuary.** [And so, in death the ego is] **revealed in its real form.** Just as before death the self-perception of the ego takes place in its inner being, so after death and after purification, the world of spirit in its plenitude is revealed from within. **This revelation**, in fact, takes place **immediately after the stripping off of the ether body.** But, like a darkening cloud, the world of desires, which are still turned toward the outer world, spreads out before it. **It is as though dark demoniacal shadows, arising out of the passions** “consuming themselves in fire,” **intermingled with a blissful world** of spiritual experience. Indeed, these passions are now **not mere shadows, but actual entities.** This becomes at once apparent when the physical organs are removed from the ego and it, therefore, can perceive what is of a spiritual nature. These **creatures appear like distortions and caricatures of what the human being previously knew through sense-perception.** Supersensible perception [reveals that] the world of the purifying fire is inhabited by **beings whose appearance for the spiritual eye can be horrible and painful, whose pleasure seems to be destruction and whose passion is bent upon a spiritual evil.** [By] comparison ... **the evil of the sense world appears insignificant. The passions indicated, which human beings bring into this [spirit] world, appear to these creatures as food by means of which their power receives constant strengthening.** The picture thus drawn of a world imperceptible to the senses can appear less incredible if one for a moment observes a part of the animal world with unprejudiced eyes. For the spiritual gaze, what is a cruel, prowling wolf? What manifests itself in what the senses perceive in [the wolf]? Nothing but a soul that lives in passions and acts through them. One can call the external form of the wolf an embodiment of these passions. Even if a person had no organs with which to perceive [it], he would still have to acknowledge the existence of [this] being [provided] its passions show invisibly in their effects. [Imagine] a power, invisible to the eye, prowling around, by means of which everything could happen that occurs through the visible wolf.

Above is the stuff of many nightmares and horror stories, but it effectively makes the point: The enduring reality of the prowling beast is a spiritual entity foremost. There are echoes of The Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis in the following, where predatory demons are presented as imbibing the essence of lesser depraved souls, toasting the triumphs of their pride. Biblically, Satan is described as a beast prowling the earth, seeking vulnerable prey to devour.

To be sure, the beings of the purifying fire do not exist for sensory, but for supersensible consciousness only; **their effects**, however, are clearly manifest: they consist in **the destruction of the ego when it gives them nourishment**. These effects become clearly visible when a well-founded pleasure increases to lack of moderation and excess, for what is perceptible to the senses would also attract the ego only in so far as the pleasure is founded in its own nature. The animal is impelled to desire only by means of that in the outer world for which its three bodies are craving. Man possesses nobler pleasures because a fourth member, the ego, is added to the three bodily members. But **if the ego seeks for a gratification that serves to destroy its own nature, not to maintain and further it**, then such craving can be neither the effect of its three bodies, nor that of its own nature. It can only be the effect of beings who, in their true form, remain hidden from the senses, beings who can set to work on the higher nature of the ego and arouse in it passions that have no relationship to sense existence, but can only be satisfied through it. **Beings exist who are nourished by desires and passions that are worse than any animal passions, because they do not have their being in the sense world, but seize upon the spiritual and drag it down into the realm of the senses.** For that reason the forms of such beings are, for supersensible perception, more hideous and gruesome than the forms of the wildest animals, in which only passions are embodied that originate in the sense world. **The destructive forces of these beings exceed immeasurably all destructive fury existing in the visible animal world.** Supersensible knowledge must, in this way, enlarge the human horizon to include a world of beings that, in a certain respect, stand lower than the visible world of destructive animals.

When man, after death, has passed through this world, he finds himself confronted by a world that contains the spirit, producing a longing within him that finds its satisfaction only in the spirit. **Now too, however, he distinguishes between what belongs to his ego and what forms the environment of this ego, that is, its spiritual outer world.** Only, what he experiences of this environment streams toward him in the way the perception of his own ego streams toward him during his sojourn in the body. While in the life between birth and death his environment speaks to him through his bodily organs, after all bodies have been laid aside the language of the new environment penetrates directly into the “innermost sanctuary” of his ego. The entire environment of the human being is filled with beings of like nature with his ego, for only an ego has access to another ego. **Just as minerals, plants, and animals surround him in the sense world and compose that world,**

so after death he is surrounded by a world that is composed of beings of a spiritual nature. — Yet he brings with him into this world something that does not belong to his environment there, namely, what the ego has experienced within the sense world. Immediately after death, and as long as the ether body was still united with the ego, the sum of these experiences appeared in the form of a comprehensive memory picture. The ether body itself is then, to be sure, cast off, but **something from this memory picture remains as an imperishable possession of the ego.** What has thus been retained appears as an extract, an essence made from all the experiences that the human being has passed through between birth and death. **This is life's spiritual yield, its fruit.** This yield **contains everything of a spiritual character that has been revealed through the senses. Without life in the sense world, however, it could not have come into existence.** After death the ego feels this spiritual fruit of the sense world as its own inner world with which it enters a world composed of beings who manifest themselves as only his ego can manifest itself in its innermost depths. Just as the plant seed, [as] an extract of the entire plant, develops only when it is inserted into another world (the earth), so **what the ego brings with it out of the sense world unfolds like a seed upon which the spiritual environment acts that has now received it.** If the science of the supersensible is to describe what occurs in this “land of the spirits,” it can indeed only do so by portraying it in pictures. Still, these **pictures appear as absolute reality to supersensible consciousness** when it investigates the corresponding occurrences imperceptible to the physical eye. What is to be described here may be illustrated by means of comparisons with the sense world, for although it is wholly of a spiritual nature, it has, in a certain respect, a similarity to the sense world. For example, just as in the world of the senses a color appears when an object impresses the eye, in the “land of the spirits,” when a spiritual being acts upon the ego, an experience is produced similar to one made by a color. But this experience is produced in the way in which, in the life between birth and death, only the perception of the ego can be produced in the soul's inner being. It is not as though the light struck the human inner being from without, but as though another being were acting directly upon the ego, causing it to portray this activity in a colored picture. Thus **all beings of the spiritual environment of the ego express themselves in a world of radiating colors.** Since their origin is of a different kind, these color experiences of the spirit world are, naturally, of a character somewhat **different from the experiences of physical color.** The same thing can be said of other impressions that the human being receives from the sense world. The impressions that most resemble those of the sense world are the tones of the spiritual world. The more the human being becomes familiar with this world, the more will it become for him **an inwardly pulsating life that may be likened to tones and their harmonies in sensory reality.** These tones, however, are not experienced as something reaching an organ from outside, but as a force streaming through the ego out into the world. **The human being feels the tone as he feels his own speaking or singing in the sense world, but he knows that in the spiritual world these tones streaming out from him are at the same time manifestations of other beings poured out into the world through him.** A still higher manifestation takes place in the land of spirit beings when the **tone becomes**

“spiritual speech.” Then not only the *pulsing life* of another spirit being streams through the ego, but a being of this kind imparts its own inner nature to this ego. Without that separation which all companionship must experience in the physical world, **two beings live in each other when the ego is thus permeated by “spiritual speech.”** The companionship of the ego with other spirit beings after death is really of this kind.

Three realms of the [world] of spirits appear before supersensible consciousness that may be **compared with three regions of the physical** sense world:

The first region is the “solid land” of the spiritual world, the second, the “region of oceans and rivers,” the third, the “atmospheric region”. --What assumes [material] form on earth so that it may be perceived by means of physical organs, this is perceived in its spiritual nature in the first realm of the land of spirit beings. For example, the force that gives the crystal its form may be perceived there, but what thus appears is the antithesis of the form it assumes in the sense world. The space, which in the physical world is filled with the stone mass, appears to spiritual vision as a kind of cavity. Around this cavity, however, **the force is visible that gives form to the stone.** The color the stone possesses in the physical world is experienced in the spiritual world as **the complementary color.** Thus a red stone appears greenish in the spirit land and a green stone, reddish. The other characteristics also **appear in their complementary forms.** Just as stones, earth masses, and so forth, make up the solid land — the continental regions — of the physical world, so the **structures described above compose “the solid land” of the spirit world.**

Everything that is life within the sense world is the oceanic region in the spirit world. Life to the physical eye is manifest in its effects in plants, animals, and men. **Life to spiritual vision is a flowing entity that permeates the land of spirits like seas and rivers.** A still better analogy is that of the circulation of the blood in the body. Whereas oceans and rivers appear irregularly distributed within the physical world, there is **a certain regularity, like that of the circulation of the blood,** in the distribution of this streaming life of the land of spirit beings. This flowing life is **heard simultaneously as a spiritual entoning.**

The third realm of the spirit land is its “atmosphere.” What appears in the sense world as sensation exists in the spiritual realm as an all-pervading presence like the earth's air. Here we must imagine a [gaseous] sea of flowing feeling. **Sorrow and pain, joy and delight flow through this realm like wind or a raging tempest** in the atmosphere of the sense world. Imagine a battle raging upon earth. Not only human forms confront each other there, forms that can be seen with the physical eyes, but feelings stand forth **opposing feelings,** passions opposing passions. The battlefield is filled with pain as well as with human forms. Everything that is experienced there of the nature of **passion, pain, joy of conquest,** is present not alone in its effects perceptible to the senses, but the spiritual sense becomes

conscious of it as atmospheric processes in the land of spirits. **Such an event in the spirit is like a thunderstorm in the physical world, and the perception of these events may be likened to the hearing of words** in the physical world. Therefore it is said that just as the air surrounds and permeates the earth beings, so do “wafting spiritual words” enclose the beings and processes of the spirit land.

There are still other perceptions possible in this spiritual world. What may be compared to warmth and light of the physical world is also present. What permeates everything in the spirit land, **like warmth permeating earthly things, is the thought world** itself, only here, thoughts **must be imagined as living, independent entities**. What is apprehended as **thoughts in the physical world is like the shadow** of what exists in the land of spirits as thought beings. If we imagine thought, as it exists in human beings, withdrawn from man and endowed as an active entity with its own inner life, then we have a feeble illustration of what permeates the fourth region of the spirit land. What man perceives as thoughts in his physical world between birth and death is only the manifestation of the thought world as it is able to express itself through the instrumentality of the bodies. But all such thoughts entertained by human beings, which signify an *enrichment* of the physical world, have their origin in this region. One need not think here merely of the ideas of the great inventors, of the geniuses. It can be seen how every person has sudden ideas that he does not owe merely to the outer world, but with which he transforms this outer world itself. Feelings and passions whose causes lie in the outer world have to be placed in the third region of the spirit land. But **everything that can so live in the human soul as to make him a creator, causing him to transform and fructify his surroundings, is perceptible in its primeval, essential form in the fourth sphere of the spiritual world**.

What exists in the **fifth region** may be compared with physical *light*. It is *wisdom* revealing itself in its innermost form. **Beings belonging to this region shed wisdom upon their environment, just as the sun sheds light upon physical beings**. What is illuminated by this wisdom appears in its true significance and meaning for the spiritual world, just as a physical object displays its color when it is shone upon by the light.

There exist still higher regions of the land of the spirits, descriptions of which will be found in a later part of this work. [But again in summary:] After death, the ego is immersed in this [spiritual] world, together with the harvest that it brings with it from its life in the sense world. This harvest is still united with that part of the astral body that has not been thrown off at the end of the period of purification. Only that part falls away which after death was inclined with its desires and longings toward physical life. The immersion of the ego in the spiritual world, together with what it has acquired in the sense world, may be compared with the insertion of a seed into the ripening earth. Just as this seed draws substances and forces from its environment in order to develop into a new plant, so, too, unfolding and growth is the very essence of the ego being embedded in the world of spirit.

Within what an organ perceives lies hidden the [spiritual] force by means of which the organ itself is created. The eye perceives the light, but without the light there would be no eye. Beings that pass their lives in darkness develop no organs of sight. In this manner the whole bodily organism of the human being is created out of the hidden forces lying within what is perceived [using] these bodily members. The physical body is built up by the forces of the physical world, the ether body by those of the life world, and the astral body is formed out of the astral world. When the ego is now transplanted [by way of physical death] into the spirit land, it encounters those forces that remain hidden to physical perception. In the first region of the spirit land the **spiritual beings are [now] perceptible who always surround the human being and who have also fashioned his physical body**. Thus in the physical world, man perceives nothing but the [material] manifestations of those spiritual forces that have also formed his own physical body. After death, he is himself in the midst of these formative forces that now appear to him in their own, previously concealed, form. Likewise, in the second region he is in the midst of the forces composing his ether body. In the third region, forces stream toward him out of which his astral body has been organized. The higher regions of the spirit land also now impart to him what composes his form in his life between birth and death.

These beings of the spirit world now co-operate with what man has brought with him as fruit from the former life and what now becomes a seed. By means of this cooperation man is built up anew as a spiritual being. In sleep the physical and ether bodies continued their existence; the astral body and ego were, to be sure, outside of these two bodies, but still united with them. Whatever influence the astral body and the ego received from the spiritual world [during the sleep state, this] could only serve to restore the forces exhausted during the waking period. [However] when the physical and ether bodies have been laid aside, and when (after the period of purification) those parts of the astral body still connected with the physical world through desires are also laid aside-- all that streams toward the ego from the spirit world now becomes not only a perfecter, but a re-creator [of the soul]. After a certain length of time (which will be discussed later), a **[newly created] astral [or soul] body has formed itself around the ego**; the [new soul is so prepared to] dwell in ether and physical bodies befitting the [re-created] human being between [a newly appointed] birth and death. **He [the ego spirit] can again pass [as a new soul] through birth and appear in a new earth existence into which the fruit of the previous life has been incorporated.** Up to the time of re-forming a new astral body, man is a witness of his own re-creation. Since the powers of the spirit land do not reveal themselves to him by means of outer organs, but from within, like his own ego in self-consciousness, he is able to perceive this revelation as long as his mind is not yet directed to an outwardly perceptible world. The moment, however, the astral body is newly formed, his attention turns outward. **The astral body once more requires an external ether and physical body. It therefore turns away from the revelations of the inner world.** For this reason an intermediate state now begins, during which man **sinks into unconsciousness**. Consciousness can only reappear in the physical world when the necessary organs

for physical perception have been formed. During this period in which consciousness ... ceases, **the new ether body begins to attach itself to the astral body** and the human being can then again enter into a physical body. **Only an ego that has of itself [transformed and] produced Life Spirit and Spirit Man** (the hidden, creative forces in the ether and physical bodies) **would be able to take part consciously** in the attachment of these two members. As long as man is not developed to this point, **beings who are further advanced than he in their evolution must direct the attachment** of these members. The astral body is **led by such beings to certain parents, so that he may be endowed with the proper ether and physical bodies.**

Before the attachment of the ether body is completed, something extraordinarily significant occurs for the human being who is re-entering physical existence. He has, in his previous life, created destructive forces that became evident when he experienced his life in reverse order after death. Let us take again the example suggested above. A person had caused someone pain in an outburst of anger in the fortieth year of his previous life. After death, he met this pain of the other person in the form of a force destructive to the development of his own ego. So it is with all such occurrences of his previous life. **On re-entering physical life, these [previous] hindrances to [spiritual] evolution confront the ego anew** [a third time, as it were]. Just as at death a kind of memory picture of the past life arose before the human ego, **now a pre-vision of the coming life** presents itself. Again he sees a tableau, which this time displays all the hindrances he must remove if his evolution is to make further progress. What he thus sees becomes the starting point of forces that he must carry with him into a new life. **The picture of the pain that he has caused another person becomes the force impelling the ego, on re-entering life, to make reparation for this pain.** Thus the previous life **has a determining effect upon the new life.** The actions of this new life are caused, in a certain way, by [actions] of the previous life. This orderly connection between a former and a later existence must be considered as **the law of destiny.** It has become the custom to designate this law by the name *karma*, **a term borrowed from oriental wisdom.**

The fashioning of a new corporeal organization is not the only activity that is required of the human being **between death and a new birth.** While this building up is taking place, man lives outside the physical world. But during this time the earth proceeds in its evolution. Within relatively short periods of time the earth changes its countenance. How did those regions, which at present are occupied by Germany, appear a few millennia ago? When man reappears in a new life, the earth as a rule presents quite a different appearance from the one it had in his previous life. While he was absent from the earth all sorts of changes have occurred. **Hidden forces also are at work in this transformation of the face of the earth.** Their activities proceed from the same world in which man dwells after death, and **he himself must co-operate in this transformation** of the earth. He can do so only **under the guidance of higher beings**, as long as he has not acquired, through the development of Life Spirit and Spirit Man, a clear consciousness concerning the

relationship between the spirit and its expression in the physical. But **he helps to transform the earthly conditions**. It can be said that human beings, during the period between death and a new birth, transform the earth **in such a way that its conditions harmonize with their own development**. If we observe a particular spot on the earth at a definite point of time and observe it again after a long span, finding it in a fully changed condition, the forces that have wrought this change are the forces of the human dead. In this way men have a relationship with the earth also during the period between death and a new birth. Supersensible consciousness sees in all physical existence the manifestation of a hidden spirituality. For physical observation, it is the light of the sun, climatic changes, and similar phenomena that bring about the transformation of the earth. For supersensible observation, the forces of the human dead are active in the rays of light that fall upon the plants from the sun. By observing supersensibly one becomes aware of how human souls hover above the plants, how they change the surface of the earth, and so forth. The **attention of the human being is not only turned upon himself** and upon the preparation for his own new earth life; indeed, **he is called upon to work spiritually upon the outer world**, just as he is called upon to work physically in the life between birth and death.

Not only from the land of spirit beings does human life affect the conditions of the physical world, however, but, **vice versa, all activity in physical existence has its effects in the spiritual world**. An example will illustrate what happens in this respect. A bond of love exists between mother and child. This love arises out of an attraction between the two that has its roots in the forces of the sense world. But it changes in the course of time; a spiritual bond is formed more and more out of the sensory, and this spiritual link is fashioned not merely for the physical world, but also for the land of spirits. This is also true for other relationships. What has been spun in the physical world through spiritual beings remains in the spiritual world. **Friends who have become closely united in life belong together also in the land of spirits, and, after laying aside their bodies, they are in much more intimate communion than in physical life**. For as spirits they exist for each other through the manifestation of their inner nature in the same way that the higher spiritual beings manifest their existence to one another -- through their inner nature, as we have described above. **A tie that has been woven between two people brings them together again in a new life**. Therefore, in the truest sense of the word, **we must speak of people finding each other again after death**.

What has once taken place with a person, during the period from birth to death and then from death to a re-birth, repeats itself. **Man [as an ego-spirit] returns to earth again and again** when the fruit that he has acquired in one physical life has reached maturity in the land of the spirits. **Yet, we must not think here of repetition without beginning and end**, for the human being passed, at some time, from other forms of existence into those that take place in the manner described, and he will in the future pass on to others. A picture of these transitional stages will be presented when, subsequently, the evolution of the cosmos — in relation to man — is described from the standpoint of supersensible consciousness.

*Note how that the following arguments highlight the presuppositions of opposing worldviews –materialistic versus spiritualistic-- rather than their contrary conclusions. The real difference does not reside in intellectual capacity to grasp facts and draw logical conclusions. Steiner indicates prejudiced **points of view** as the root divergence of opinion, meaning the underlying belief systems (or unbelief) regarding any possibility or admissibility of spiritual causes. These prime assumptions naturally function as cognitive filters, selecting and defining the perimeters of a researcher's field of observation and deductive process.*

The processes that occur between death and a new birth are, naturally, still more concealed for outer sensory observation than the spiritual element that underlies manifest existence between birth and death. This sensory observation can see the effects of this part of the concealed world only where they enter into physical existence. The question for sensory observation is, whether **the human being who passes through birth into life brings with him something of the processes described** by supersensible cognition as taking place between a previous death and birth. [Suppose] someone finds a snail shell in which no trace of an animal is to be seen. He will nevertheless acknowledge that this snail shell has come into existence through the activity of some animal [rather than] believe it was constructed in its form purely by means of physical forces. Likewise, **a person who observes a living human being and finds something that cannot have its origin in *this* life can admit with reason that it originates in what the science of the supersensible described**, if thereby a clarifying light is thrown upon what is otherwise inexplicable. Thus intelligent sensory observation would be able to find **that the invisible causes are comprehensible through their visible effects**, and to anyone who observes this physical life entirely without prejudice, the above will appear — with every new observation — more and more convincing. It is **only a question of finding the right standpoint** for observing the effects in outer life. For example, where are the effects of what supersensible cognition describes as processes of the time of purification? How do the effects of the experiences that man undergoes manifest themselves after this time of purification in the purely spiritual realm, according to the evidence of spiritual research?

Problems enough force themselves into every earnest and deep consideration of life in this field. We see one person born in need and misery, equipped with only meager ability, and he appears to be predestined to a pitiable existence because of the conditions prevailing at his birth. Another will, from the first moment of his life, be cherished and cared for by solicitous hands and hearts; brilliant capacities unfold in him, he is cut out for a fruitful, satisfactory existence. Two contrasting points of view can be asserted in respect of such problems. **The one adheres to what the senses perceive and what the intellect, bound to the senses, can grasp.** This point of view sees no problem in the fact that one person is born to good fortune,

the other to misfortune. Although such a point of view may not wish to use the word “chance”, those who hold it are not ready to assume an interrelated web of laws that causes such diversities. With respect to aptitudes and talents, this way of thinking adheres [solely] to what is ... “inherited” from parents, grandparents, and other ancestors. **It will refuse to seek the causes in spiritual events that man himself has experienced before his birth, and through which he has formed his capacities and talents, quite apart from the hereditary descent from his ancestors.**

Another point of view will not feel satisfied with such an interpretation. It will hold that even in the outer world nothing occurs at a definite place or in definite surroundings without the necessity of presupposing a reason for the cause of it. Although in many instances these causes have not yet been investigated, yet they exist. An Alpine flower does not grow in the lowlands; there is something in its nature that unites it with the Alpine regions. Likewise, **there must be something in a human being that causes him to be born in a definite environment. This is not to be explained by causes that lie merely in the physical world.** To a serious thinker this must appear as though a blow dealt another should be explained not by the feelings of the aggressor, but rather by the physical mechanism of his hand. — Those who have this point of view must also be **dissatisfied with all explanations of aptitude and talents as mere inheritance.** Yet it may be said in this connection that obviously certain aptitudes continue to be inherited in families. During two and a half centuries musical aptitudes were inherited by the members of the Bach family. Eight mathematicians, some of whom in their childhood were destined for quite different professions, have appeared in the Bernoulli family. The “inherited” talents have always impelled them to take up the family profession. Furthermore, it can be shown through exact investigation of the line of ancestry of an individual that, in one way or another, the talents of this individual have appeared in the ancestors and that they present only a summation of inherited tendencies. The one having the second point of view mentioned will certainly not disregard such facts, but they cannot mean the same thing to him as to the other who rests his explanations solely upon the processes of the sense world. He will point out that it is just as **impossible for the inherited traits to sum themselves up into an entire personality** as it is for the metal parts of a clock to form themselves into a clock. The first may then object, saying that the united activity of the parents can bring about the combination of traits, and that this [effectively] takes the place of the clock-maker. The second will reply: “**Just look with impartiality at the completely new element in every child's personality** --this cannot come from the parents for the simple reason that it does not exist in them.”

Unclear thinking can cause great confusion in this realm. The worst is if those having the first point of view previously stated look on those having the second as opponents of what is based upon “sure facts.” But these latter may not even think of denying the truth or the value of these facts. They also see quite clearly, for example, that a definite spiritual predisposition, even a spiritual direction, is “inherited” in a family, and that certain capacities summarized and combined in one

descendant result in a remarkable personality. They are ready to admit that the most illustrious name seldom stands at the beginning, but at the end of a blood relationship. But those holding this view should not be blamed if they are forced to draw conclusions from these findings quite different from those of the persons who merely hold to the facts of the senses. The latter may be countered by saying that **the human being certainly displays the attributes of his ancestors**, for the soul-spirit element, which enters into physical existence through birth, **takes its physical form from what heredity gives it**. But by this, nothing else is said than that **a being bears the qualities of the medium in which it is immersed**. The following is certainly a strange and trivial comparison, but the unprejudiced mind will not deny its justification. The fact that a human being appears clothed in the traits of his forebears gives no more evidence of the origin of his personal characteristics than the fact that he is wet because he fell into the water gives evidence of his inner nature. It can be said further that **if the most illustrious name stands at the end of a blood relationship covering many generations**, it shows that the bearer of this name needed this blood relationship in order to form the body required for the development of his entire personality. It is, however, **no proof whatsoever of the “inheritance” of the personal element itself; in fact, for a healthy logic**, this fact proves just the opposite. If indeed the personal gifts were inherited, they would have to stand at the beginning of this series of generations and be transmitted to the descendants. But **the appearance of a great endowment at the end of a human series proves that it is not inherited**.

It is not to be denied that those who speak of spiritual causation in life often add to the confusion. They often speak too much in general, indefinite terms.... For it is not a question of merely knowing that behind such a mechanism as the clock ... there stands something spiritual — the clock-maker — but it is of significance only to learn to know the thoughts in the mind of the clock-maker that have *preceded* the construction of the clock. These thoughts can be found again in the mechanism.

All mere dreaming and imagining about the supersensible brings only confusion for they are incapable of satisfying the opponents. The latter are right when they say that such general references to supersensible beings are not an aid to the understanding of the facts. These opponents, it is true, may say the same thing about the *definite* indications of spiritual science. In this case, however, it can be shown how the effects of hidden spiritual causes appear in outer life. The following can be maintained. **Suppose that what spiritual research has established by means of observation is true**, namely, that man after death has passed through a period of purification, that he has *experienced* psychically during that time how a definite act, performed in a previous life, is [become] a hindrance to further evolution. While he was experiencing this, the impulse developed in him to rectify the consequences of this act. He brings this impulse with him into a new life, and it then forms the trait of character that places him in a position where this rectification is possible. Consider the totality of such impulses, **and you have a reason for the destined environment in which a person is born**. — The same may apply to another supposition. Again assume that what spiritual science says is true. The

fruits of a past life are incorporated in the spiritual human seed. Between death and rebirth, this seed exists in the land of the spirits. These fruits ripen [in this realm] in order to appear again in a new life changed into talents and capacities, to form the personality in such a way that it appears as the effect of what has been gained in a former life. — [Try to] observe life without prejudice [based on these assumptions]. [You] will see through them that **all facts of the sense world can be acknowledged in their full significance and truth** [as you direct your attitude of mind toward the spiritual world]. At the same time **everything becomes comprehensible that must [otherwise] remain forever incomprehensible** to the one who relies only on physical facts. Above all, **every illogical assumption will disappear**. [Reconsider] for instance the one mentioned above, that because the most important name stands at the end of a blood relationship series, the bearer of that name must have inherited his talents. Life becomes logically comprehensible by means of the supersensible facts communicated by spiritual science.

It is interesting to note that the above method for establishing proof of otherwise unobservable facts is exactly the approach taken by modern science in regard to much of modern physics. A true scientist must admit that every 'fact' of science is merely part of an operational theory or working model. This is the basis of technology. It is true because it is demonstrated to work. Consider the theory of relativity. It assumes that the speed of light is a constant. The theory is useful and applied as fact inasmuch as it aids in calculations required to deliver a vehicle from earth to another specific point in our solar system. And yes, it works, so far as that goes. However, it is becoming generally recognized that the speed of light is NOT a constant, never has been so. So without a new model incorporating a more exact working theorem involving the varying speed of light (among other broader variables better defining the fabric of space and time), it will be impossible to navigate accurately beyond the confines of our own tiny system. Likewise, before Copernicus verified the sun's central position, there were other models that predicted the movements of observable planets quite accurately in relation to the earth, sun and moon.

The conscientious truth-seeker who, without personal experiences in the supersensible world, wishes to find his way within the facts will, however, still be able to raise an important objection. For **it can be asserted that it is inadmissible to assume the existence of any fact whatever simply for the reason that something that otherwise is inexplicable can thereby be explained**. Such an objection is surely **wholly without meaning for the one who knows the corresponding facts from supersensible experience**. In the subsequent chapters of this work, the path will be indicated that can be traveled for the purpose of becoming acquainted, not only with other spiritual facts to be described here, but

also with the law of spiritual causation as an individual experience. However, the above objection can, indeed, have significance for the person who is not willing to tread this path, but what can be said in refutation of this objection is also valuable for the one who has decided to take this path. For a person who accepts this in the right way has made the *best* initial step that can be taken on the path. — It is absolutely true that we should not accept something, the existence of which we do not otherwise know, simply because something, which otherwise remains incomprehensible, can be explained by it. **In the case of the spiritual facts mentioned, however, the matter is quite different.** If they are accepted, this has not only the intellectual consequence that life becomes comprehensible through them, but **by the admission of these assumptions into our thoughts something else is experienced.** Imagine the following case. Something happens to a person that arouses in him a feeling of distress. He can take this in two different ways. He can experience distress over the occurrence and yield himself to its disturbing aspects, even perhaps sink into grief. He can, however, take it in another way. He can say, “In reality, I have in a past life developed in myself the force that has confronted me with this event; I have, in fact, brought this thing upon myself,” and he can arouse in himself all the feelings that can result from such a thought. Naturally, the thought must be experienced with the utmost sincerity and all possible force if it is to have such a result for the life of feeling and sensation. Whoever achieves this will have an experience that can best be illustrated by a comparison. Let us suppose that two men get hold of a stick of sealing wax. One makes intellectual observations concerning its “inner nature.” These observations may be very clever; if there is nothing to show this “Inner nature,” one might easily reply that this is pure fantasy. The other, however, rubs the sealing wax with a cloth and then shows that it attracts small particles. There is a tremendous difference between the thoughts that have passed through the head of the first man, arousing his observations, and those of the second man. The thoughts of the first have no actual results; those of the second, however, have aroused a force, that is, something actual, from its concealment. — This is also the case with the thoughts of the human being who imagines that, through a former life, he has implanted into himself the power to encounter an event. This mere thought arouses in him a real force by means of which he can meet the event quite differently from the way he would have met it had he not entertained this thought. The inherent necessity of this event, which otherwise he might have considered merely due to chance, dawns upon him, and he will at once understand that he has had the right thought, for it had the force to disclose to him the facts.

CS Lewis observed the same logical problem before his conversion to Christianity, as detailed in his biography, Surprised by Joy. Why are people generally so preoccupied with the intellectual idea, as well as the emotional longing for a higher existence beyond the confines of this material life, unless there is actually a living something actively calling to another something within our being to awaken and yearn toward its

attainment? Animals don't seem to suffer so. This immaterial stirring of something separates man from animal like no other experience.

If a person repeats **such inner processes, they become the means of an inner supply of strength and thus they prove their truth through their fruitfulness, and this truth becomes manifest gradually and powerfully.** These processes have a healthy effect in regard to spirit, soul, and body; indeed, in every respect they act beneficially upon life. Man becomes aware that in this way he enters in the right manner into the relationships of life, whereas he is on the wrong path when he considers only the one life between birth and death. His soul becomes stronger because of this knowledge. — **Such purely inner proof of spiritual causation can only be produced by each person himself in his own intimate soul life, but everyone can have such proof. Anyone who has not produced this proof cannot, of course, judge its power. Anyone who has produced it can no longer have any doubt about it.** It is not surprising that this is so, for it is only natural that what is so intimately connected with man's innermost nature, his personality, can also be satisfactorily proved only by means of the most intimate experience. — The objection cannot be made, however, that each person must deal personally with such matters since they have to do with an inner experience of this kind, and that they cannot be the concern of spiritual science. It is true that each person must have the experience himself, just as **each person must himself understand the proof of a mathematical problem.** The means by which the experience can be attained, however, **holds good for everyone,** just as the method of proving a mathematical problem holds good for everyone.

It should not be denied that — aside from supersensible observations, of course — the **proof by means of the force-producing power** of the corresponding thoughts just referred to, is the only one that holds its own if viewed with impartial logic. All other considerations are certainly important, but they all will possess something that offers a point of attack. To be sure, anyone who has acquired a sufficiently unprejudiced point of view will find something in the possibility and actuality of the education of man that has logically effective power of **proof for the fact that a spiritual being is struggling for existence within the bodily sheath.** He will **compare the animal with the human being** and say to himself that in the former, its normal characteristics and capacities appear at birth as something definite, which shows clearly how it is predestined by heredity and how it will develop in the outer world. See how the tiny chick from birth carries out vital functions in a definite way. **In the human being, however, something enters into relationship with his inner life, through education, that can exist without any connection whatsoever with [physical] heredity,** and he can make the effects of such outer influences his own. Anyone who teaches knows that forces from the inner being must come to meet such influences. **If this is not the case, then all schooling, all education is meaningless.** For the unprejudiced educator, there exists a clear-cut boundary between inherited characteristics and those inner human forces that shine through these characteristics originating in former earth lives. True, it is impossible to adduce “weighty” proofs for these things in the same way that certain physical facts

may be demonstrated by means of the scales. But then, these things are the intimacies of life, and for the person who has a sense for such things, these impalpable evidences are likewise conclusive, even more conclusive than the obvious reality. That animals can be trained, that is, that they acquire qualities and faculties through education, offers no objection for the one who is able to see the essential thing. Aside from the fact that everywhere in the world transitions are to be found, the **results of animal training do not fuse in like manner with the animal's personal nature, as is the case with human beings.** It is even emphasized that the abilities the domestic animal acquires through training during its life with man, are inheritable, that is, that they have their effects in the species, not in the individual. Darwin describes how dogs fetch and carry without having learned to do so or having seen it done. Who would assert a similar thing in regard to human education?

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In the following chapters we shall go back to this primeval state of the human being. It will be shown, from the results of spiritual science, how this human being has attained his present form in relation to the evolution of the earth. [Then] we shall be able to point out still more exactly how the spiritual essential core of man penetrates into the physical body from supersensible worlds, and how the spiritual law of causation — “human destiny” — is developed.

IV. The Evolution of the Cosmos and Man

Reader, please refer to the original book text for this section, being beyond the scope of my study at this time, at least in regard to the ASP experience. Follow the web link at top to an online library edition.

V. Cognition of the Higher Worlds — Initiation.

BETWEEN birth and death man, at his present evolutionary stage, lives in ordinary life through three soul states: waking, sleeping, and the state between them, dreaming. Dreaming will be briefly considered later on in this book. Here let us first consider life in its two chief alternating states — waking and sleeping. **Man acquires a knowledge of higher worlds if he develops a third soul state besides sleep and waking.** During its waking state the soul surrenders itself to sense-impressions and thoughts that are aroused by these impressions. During sleep the sense-impressions cease, but the soul also loses its consciousness. The experiences of the day sink into the sea of unconsciousness. Let us now **imagine that the soul might be able during sleep to become conscious despite the exclusion of all sense-impressions**, as is the case in deep sleep, and even though the memories of the day's experiences were lacking. **Would the soul, in that case, find itself in a state of nothingness?** Would it be unable to have any experiences? An answer to

these questions is only possible if a similar state of consciousness can actually be induced, if the soul is able to experience something even though no sense-activities and no memory of them are present in it. **The soul, in regard to the ordinary outer world, would then find itself in a state similar to sleep, and yet it would not be asleep, but, as in the waking state, it would confront a real world.** Such a state of consciousness can be induced if the human being can bring about the soul experiences made possible by **spiritual science**; and everything that this science describes concerning the worlds that lie beyond the senses **is the result of research in just such a state of consciousness.** — In the preceding descriptions some information has been given about higher worlds. **In this chapter** — as far as it is possible in this book — we shall deal with **the means through which the state of consciousness necessary for this method of research is developed.**

This state of consciousness resembles sleep only in a certain respect, namely, through the fact that **all outer sense-activities cease** with its appearance; also all **thoughts are stilled that have been aroused through these sense-activities.** Whereas in sleep the soul has no power to experience anything consciously, it is to receive this power from the indicated state of consciousness. Through it **a perceptive faculty is awakened** in the soul that in ordinary life is only aroused by the activities of the senses. The soul's awakening to such **a higher state of consciousness** may be **called initiation.**

The means of initiation lead from the ordinary state of waking consciousness into a soul activity, through which spiritual organs of observation are employed. These organs are present in the soul in a germinal state; they must be developed. — *It may happen that a human being at a certain moment in the course of his life, without special preparation, makes the discovery in his soul that such higher organs have developed in him. This has come about as a sort of involuntary self-awakening.* Such a human being will find that through it his entire nature is transformed. A boundless enrichment of his soul experiences occurs. He will find that there is no knowledge of the sense world that gives him such bliss, such soul satisfaction, and such inner warmth as he now experiences through the revelation of knowledge inaccessible to the physical eye. Strength and certainty of life will pour into his will from a spiritual world. — There are such cases of self-initiation. They should, however, not tempt us to believe that this is the one and only way and that we should wait for such self-initiation, doing nothing to bring about initiation through proper training. Nothing need be said here about **self-initiation**, for it *can appear without observing any kind of rules.* How the human being may [however] develop through **training the organs of perception that lie embryonically in the soul will be described** here....

* * *

The training to be described here places in the hands of the person who has the will for his higher development the means for undertaking the transformation of his soul. Any **dangerous interference** with the inner nature of the disciple would only

occur were the teacher to undertake this transformation **by means that elude the consciousness of the pupil**. No proper instruction for spiritual development in our age employs such means. **A proper instruction does not make the pupil a blind instrument. It gives him the rules of conduct, and he then carries them out.** There is no need to withhold the reason why this or that rule of conduct is given. The acceptance of the rules and their employment by a person who seeks spiritual development need not be a matter of blind faith. Blind faith should be completely excluded from this domain.... We are able to understand correctly the way of working of these rules prior to their practice. But it can be experienced only during training. The experience, however, will always be accompanied by understanding if we accompany each step with sound judgment, and at the present time a true spiritual science will only indicate rules for training upon which sound judgment may be brought to bear. **Anyone who is willing to surrender himself to such training only, and who does not permit himself to be driven to blind faith by prejudice of any kind, will find that all doubts disappear.** Objections to a proper training for a higher state of consciousness will not disturb him.

Even for a person whose **inner maturity can lead** him sooner or later **to self-awakening** of the spiritual organs of perception such training is not superfluous, but on the contrary it is quite especially suited to him. For there are but few cases in which such a person, prior to self-initiation, is not ***compelled to pass through the most varied, crooked and useless byways***. **Training spares him these deviations. It leads straight forward.** If self-initiation takes place for such a soul, it is caused by its having acquired the necessary maturity in the course of previous lives. It may easily happen, however, that just such a soul has a certain dim presentiment of its maturity and through this presentiment is inclined to reject the proper training. This presentiment may produce a certain pride that hinders faith in a true spiritual training. It is possible that a certain stage of soul development may remain concealed up to a certain age in human life and only then appear, but training may be just the right means of bringing forth this stage. If the individual pays no heed to such training, it may happen that his ability remains concealed during his present life and will only reappear in some subsequent life.

In regard to the training for supersensible knowledge described here, it is important to avoid certain obvious misunderstandings. One of these may arise through thinking that training would transform man into a different being in regard to his entire life-conduct. It cannot, however, be a question of giving man general instructions for his conduct of life, but of telling him about **soul-exercises which, properly performed, will give him the possibility of observing the supersensible**. These exercises have no direct influence upon the part of his life-functions that lies outside the observation of the supersensible. [It is] in addition to these life-functions [that] the human being acquires the gift of supersensible observation. The function of this observation is **as much separated from the ordinary functions of life as the state of waking is from that of sleeping**. The one cannot disturb the other in the least. Whoever, for example, wishes to permeate the ordinary course of life with impressions of supersensible perception resembles

an invalid whose sleep would be continually interrupted by injurious awakenings. It must be possible for the **free will of the trained person to induce the state** in which supersensible reality is observed. Training, to be sure, is indirectly connected with certain instructions concerning conduct in as far as, **without an ethically determined conduct of life, an insight into the supersensible is impossible or injurious**. Consequently, much of what leads to the perception of the supersensible is **at the same time a means of ennobling the conduct of life**. On the other hand, as a result of insight into the supersensible world, higher moral impulses are recognized that are also valid for the sensory-physical world. Certain moral necessities are only recognized from out this world. — A second misunderstanding would arise were it believed that any soul function leading to supersensible knowledge might produce changes in the physical organism. **Such functions have nothing whatsoever to do with anything in the realm of physiology or other branches of natural science. They are pure soul-spirit processes, entirely devoid of anything physical, like sound thinking and perception**. Nothing happens in the soul through such a function — considering its character — that is different from what takes place when it thinks or judges in a healthy fashion. Just as much or as little as sound thinking has to do with the body, so do the processes of true training for supersensible cognition have to do with the body. Anything that has a different relationship to man is not true spiritual training, but its distortion. What follows is to be taken in the sense of what has been said here. Only because supersensible knowledge is something that proceeds from the entire soul of man will it appear as if things were required for this training that would transform man into something else. In truth it is a question of instruction about functions **enabling the soul to bring into its life moments in which the supersensible may be observed**.

The attainment of a supersensible state of consciousness can only proceed from everyday waking consciousness. In this consciousness the soul lives before its elevation. Through the training **the soul acquires a means of lifting itself out of everyday consciousness**. The training that is under consideration here offers among the **first [exercises]** those that still may be designated as **functions of everyday consciousness**. The most important means are just those that consist of **quiet activities** of the soul. They **involve the opening of the soul to quite definite thoughts**. These thoughts exercise, by their very nature, an awakening power upon certain hidden faculties of the human soul. They are to be distinguished from the visualizations of everyday waking life, which have the task of depicting outer things. The more truly they do this, the truer they are, and it is part of their nature to be true in this sense. The visualizations, however, to which the soul must open itself for the purpose of spiritual training have no such task. They are so constructed that they do not depict anything external but have in themselves the peculiarity of effecting an awakening in the soul. **The best visualizations for this purpose are emblematic or symbolical**. Nevertheless, other visualizations may also be employed, for it is not a question of what they contain, but solely a question of the soul's directing its powers in such a way that it has nothing else in mind but the

visualized image under consideration. While the powers of everyday soul-life are distributed in many directions — the visualized mental representations changing very rapidly — **in spiritual training everything depends upon the concentration of the entire soul-life upon one visualization.** This visualization must, by means of free will, be placed at the center of consciousness. Symbolic visualized images are, therefore, better than those that represent outer objects or processes, for the latter have a point of attachment to the outer world, making the soul less dependent upon itself than when it employs symbolic visualizations that are formed through the soul's own energy. The essential is not what is visualized; **what is essential is the fact that the visualization, through the way it is visualized, liberates the soul from dependence on the physical.**

We understand what it means to immerse ourselves in a visualized image if we consider, first of all, the concept of memory. If, for instance, we look at a tree and then away from it so that we can no longer see it, we are then able to re-awaken the visualization of the tree in the soul by recollecting it. This visualization of the tree, which we have when the eye no longer beholds the latter, is a memory of the tree. Now let us imagine that we preserve this memory in the soul; we permit the soul, as it were, to rest upon the visualized memory picture; and at the same time we endeavor to exclude all other visualizations. Then the soul is immersed in the visualized memory picture of the tree. We then have to do with the soul's immersion in a visualized picture or image; yet this visualization is the image of an object perceived by the senses. But if we undertake this with a visualized image formed in the consciousness by an act of independent will, we shall then be able by degrees to attain the effect upon which everything depends.

This ability to focus upon memory pictures as if they were external objects distinguishes humans uniquely from animals. According to the biblical account of early man, Adam was charged particularly with the task of naming everything he observed. His mission thereby was to consciously objectify the transitory material appearances delivered by his newly created physical senses and so further develop those senses as agents of a newly growing spiritual sense of individuality (Spirit Self). This was the germinal beginning of a quality of personal freedom unique to human spirits. Its two-fold potential, like a two-edged sword, soon became apparent. One could use the freedom of will to further pursue selfhood in service of self—as proposed by the Creator's arch-enemy—or one could choose to pursue its promise in service of others as intended, and so develop the capacity for sacrificial love. What Steiner outlines here is the new task before mankind, to turn this inner objectifying ability of self-consciousness now upon the soul itself and so develop spiritual senses that will deliver information about the enduring spiritual realm.

We shall now endeavor to describe **an example of inner immersion in a symbolic visualization**. Such a visualization must first be fashioned in the soul. This may happen in the following way. We visualize a plant as it roots in the earth, as leaf by leaf sprouts forth, as its blossom unfolds, and now we think of a human being beside this plant. We make the thought alive in the soul of how he has characteristics and faculties which, when compared with those of the plant, may be considered more perfect than the latter. We contemplate how, according to his feelings and his will, he is able to move about hither and thither, while the plant is chained to the earth. Furthermore we say that the human being is indeed more perfect than the plant, but he also shows peculiarities that are not to be found in the plant. Just because of their nonexistence in the plant the latter may appear to me in a certain sense more perfect than the human being who is filled with desire and passion and follows them in his conduct. I may speak of his being led astray by his desires and passions. I see that the plant follows the pure laws of growth from leaf to leaf, that it opens its blossom passionlessly to the chaste rays of the sun. Furthermore, I may say to myself that the human being has a greater perfection than the plant, but he has purchased this perfection at the price of permitting instincts, desires, and passions to enter into his nature besides the forces of the plant, which appear pure to us. I now visualize how the green sap flows through the plant and that it is an expression of the pure, passionless laws of growth. I then visualize how the red blood flows through the human veins and how it is the expression of the instincts, desires, and passions. All this I permit to arise in my soul as vivid thought. Then I visualize further how the human being is capable of evolution; how he may purify and cleanse his instincts and passions through his higher soul powers. I visualize how, as a result of this, something base in these instincts and desires is destroyed and how the latter are reborn upon a higher plane. Then the blood may be conceived of as the expression of the purified and cleansed instincts and passions. In my thoughts I look now, for example, upon the rose and say, In the red rose petal I see the color of the green plant sap transformed into red, and the red rose, like the green leaf, follows the pure, passionless laws of growth. The red of the rose may now become the symbol of a blood that is the expression of purified instincts and passions that have stripped off all that is base, and in their purity resemble the forces active in the red rose. I now seek not merely to imbue my intellect with such thoughts but to bring them to life in my feelings. I may have a feeling of bliss when I think of the purity and passionlessness of the growing plant; I can produce within myself the feeling of how certain higher perfections must be purchased through the acquirement of instincts and desires. This can then transform the feeling of bliss, which I have felt previously, into a grave feeling. [It is then that] a feeling of liberating joy may stir in me as I surrender myself to the thought of the red blood which, like the red sap of the rose, may become the bearer of inwardly pure experiences. It is of importance that we do not confront without feeling these thoughts that serve to construct such a symbolic visualization. After we have pondered on such thoughts and feelings for a time, we are to transform them into the following symbolic visualization:

We visualize a black cross. Let this be the symbol of the destroyed base elements of instincts and passions, and at the center, where the arms of the cross intersect, let

us visualize seven red, radiant roses arranged in a circle. Let these roses be the symbol of a blood that is the expression of purified, cleansed passions and instincts.

Such a symbolic visualization should be called forth in the soul in the way illustrated above through a visualized memory image. Such visualization has a soul-awakening power if we surrender ourselves to it in inward meditation. We must seek to exclude all other thoughts during meditation. **Only the characterized symbol is to hover in spirit before the soul as intensely as possible.** — It is not without significance that this symbol is not simply given here as an awakening visualized picture, but that it **has first been constructed by means of certain thoughts** about plant and man. For the effect of such a symbol depends upon the fact of its having been constructed in the way described **before it is employed in inner meditation.** If we visualize the symbol without first having fashioned it in our own souls, it remains cold and much less effective than when it has received, through preparation, its soul-illuminating power. During meditation, however, we should not call forth in the soul all the preparatory thoughts, but merely let the visualized picture hover vividly before our inner eye, at the same time **letting the feeling hold sway** that has appeared as a result of the preparatory thoughts. Thus **the symbol becomes a token alongside the feeling-experience, and its effectiveness lies in the dwelling of the soul in this inner experience.** The longer we are able to dwell in it **without the intervention of other, disturbing, thoughts,** the more effective is the entire process. It is well, nevertheless, for us, outside the period dedicated to the actual meditation itself, to repeat the construction of the symbol by means of thoughts and feelings of the above described kind, so that the experience may not fade away. The more patience we exercise in this renewal, the more significant is the symbol for the soul. (In my book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, other examples of means for inner meditation are given. Especially effective are the meditations characterized there about the growth and decay of the plant, about the slumbering creative forces in the plant seed, about the forms of crystals, and so forth. In the present book, the nature of meditation was to be described by a single example.)

Such a symbol, as is described here, portrays no outer thing or being that is brought forth by nature. But just because of this it has an awakening power for certain purely soul faculties. To be sure, someone might raise an objection. He might say, It is true, the symbol as a whole is certainly not produced by nature, but all its details are, nevertheless, borrowed from nature — the black color, the red roses, and the other details. All this is perceived by the senses. Anyone who may be disturbed by such an objection should consider that **it is not the pictures of sense-perceptions that lead to the awakening of the higher soul faculties, but that this effect is produced only by the manner of combining these details, and this combination does not picture anything that is present in the sense world.**

The process of effective meditation was illustrated here by a symbol, as an example. In spiritual training the most manifold pictures of this kind can be employed and they can be constructed in the most varied manner. **Also certain sentences, formulae, even single words, upon which to meditate may be given.**

In every case these means to inner meditation have the objective of liberating the soul from sense-perception and of arousing it to an activity in which the impression upon the physical senses is meaningless and the development of the inner slumbering soul faculties becomes the essential. It may also be a matter of **meditation upon mere feelings and sensations**. This shows itself to be **especially effective**. Let us take, for example, the feeling of joy. In the normal course of life the soul may experience joy if an outer stimulus for it is present. If a soul with normal feelings perceives how a human being performs an action that is inspired by kindness of heart, this soul will feel pleased and happy about it. But this soul may then meditate on an action of this sort. It may say to itself, an action performed through goodness of heart is one in which the performer does not follow his own interest, but the interest of his fellow-man, and such an action may be designated morally good. The contemplating soul, however, may now free itself from the mental picture of the special case in the outer world that has given it joy or pleasure, and it may form the comprehensive idea of kindness of heart. It may perhaps think how kindness of heart arises by the one soul absorbing, so to speak, the interests of the other soul and making them its own, and it may now feel joy about this moral idea of kindness of heart. This is not the joy in this or that process in the sense world, but the joy in an idea as such. If we attempt to keep alive such joy in the soul for a certain length of time, then this is meditation on inner feeling, on inner sensation. The idea is not then the awakening factor of the inner soul faculties, but the **holding sway, for a certain length of time, of the feeling** within the soul that is not aroused through a mere single external impression. — Since supersensible knowledge is able to penetrate more deeply into the nature of things than ordinary thinking, it is able through its experiences to indicate **feelings that act in a still higher degree upon the unfolding of the soul faculties**, when they are employed in inner meditation. Although this is necessary for higher degrees of training, we should remember the fact that energetic meditation on such feelings and sensations, as for example have been characterized in the observation of kindness of heart, is able to lead very far. — Since human beings are varied in character, so are the effective means of training varied for the individual man. — **In regard to the duration of meditation** we have to consider that the effect is all the stronger, the more tranquilly and deliberately this meditation is carried out. But **any excess in this direction should be avoided**. A certain inner discretion that results through the exercises themselves may teach the pupil to keep within due bounds.

Such exercises in inner meditation will in general have to be carried on for a long time before the student himself is able to perceive any results. **What belongs unconditionally to spiritual training is patience and perseverance**. Whoever does not call up both of these within his soul and does not, in all tranquillity, continuously carry out his exercises, so that patience and perseverance form **the fundamental mood of the soul**, cannot achieve much.

It will have become evident from the preceding exposition that meditation is a means of acquiring knowledge about higher worlds, but it will also have become

evident that not just any content of thought will lead to it, but only a content that has been evolved in the manner described.

The path that has been indicated here leads, in the first place, to what may be called *imaginative cognition*. It is the **first stage of higher cognition**. Knowledge that rests upon sense-perception and upon the working over of the sense-perceptions through the intellect bound to the senses may be called, in the sense of spiritual science, “objective cognition.” Beyond this lie the higher stages of knowledge, the first of which is imaginative cognition. The expression “imaginative” may call forth doubts in those who think “imagination” stands only for unreal imaginings, that is, a visualization of something that has no corresponding reality. In spiritual science, however, “imaginative” cognition is to be conceived as something coming into existence through a supersensible state of consciousness of the soul. **What is perceived in this state are spiritual facts and beings to which the senses have no access.** Because this state **is awakened in the soul by meditating on symbols or “imaginings,”** the world of this higher state of consciousness may be named the “imaginative” world, and the knowledge corresponding to it “imaginative” cognition. **“Imaginative,” therefore, means something which is “real” in a different sense from the facts and beings of physical sense-perception.** The content of the visualizations that fill imaginative experience is of no importance, but of utmost importance is the soul faculty that is developed through this experience.

Here again, ASP visualizations are too confused and confusing to be held as the basis for any shared or objective reality in the sense we attach to external material observations. This is where other researchers, such as Freud and Jung, failed to distinguish, though they tried to establish a science of collective unconscious symbols. The real significance of the level of consciousness realized during ASP (though felt to be higher than normal clarity) is the experience as a process rather than an end in itself. It is an introduction to a new form of cognition apart from the material body, superseding and even rendering obsolete the brain mechanism. Clarity and spiritual objectivity come later as this super-sensible mode of knowledge becomes normalized and fully awakened.

An obvious objection to the employment of the characterized **symbolic visualizations** is that their fashioning **corresponds to a dreamlike thinking** and to arbitrary imagining and therefore can bring forth only doubtful results. In regard to the symbols that lie at the foundation of true spiritual training, doubts of this character are unjustified. For the **symbols are chosen** in such a way that their connection with outer sense reality may be entirely disregarded. **Their value sought merely in the force with which they affect the soul when the latter withdraws all attention from the outer world, when it suppresses all**

impressions of the senses, and shuts out all thoughts that it may cherish as a result of outer stimuli. The **process of meditation** is best illustrated by a comparison with the state of sleep. **On the one hand it resembles [unconscious sleep], on the other it is the complete opposite. It is a sleep that represents, in regard to everyday consciousness, a higher waking state.** The important point is that through concentration upon the visualization or picture in question the soul is compelled to draw forth much stronger powers from its own depths than it employs in everyday life or in everyday cognition. Its inner activity is thereby enhanced. **It liberates itself from the bodily nature just as it does during sleep, but it does not, as in the latter case, pass over into unconsciousness, but becomes conscious of a world that it has not previously experienced.** Although this soul state may be compared with sleep in regard to the liberation from the body, yet it may be described as **an enhanced waking state** when compared with everyday waking consciousness. Through this the soul experiences itself in its true inner, independent nature. [Otherwise] while in the everyday waking state [the soul] becomes conscious of itself only through the help of the body. Because of the weaker unfolding of its forces in that state, the soul does not, therefore, experience itself, but is only aware of the picture that, like a reflection, the body (or properly speaking its processes) sketches for it.

The symbols that are constructed in the manner described above, by their very nature, do not yet relate to anything real in the spiritual world. They **serve the purpose of detaching the human soul from sense-perception and from the brain instrument to which the intellect is bound** at the outset. This detachment cannot occur in man prior to his feeling the following: I now visualize something by means of forces in connection with which my senses and my brain do not serve me as instruments. **The first thing that the human being experiences on this path is such a liberation from the physical organs.** He may then say to himself, **“My consciousness is not extinguished when I disregard the sense-perceptions and ordinary intellectual thinking; I can lift myself out of them and then feel myself as a being alongside the [self] I was previously.”** This is *the first purely spiritual experience: the observation of a soul-spirit ego being*. This, as a **new Self, has lifted itself out of the self that is only bound to the physical senses and the physical intellect.** If without meditation the pupil had released himself from the world of the senses and intellect, he would have sunk into the “nothingness” of unconsciousness. The soul-spirit being, naturally, existed before meditation had taken place, but it did not yet have any organs of observing the spiritual world. It was somewhat similar to a physical body without eyes to see, or ears to hear. The force that was employed in meditation first has fashioned the soul-spirit organs out of the previously unorganized soul-spirit nature. The individual beholds first, therefore, what he has created. Thus, the first experience is, in a certain sense, self-perception. It belongs to the essence of spiritual training that the soul, through the practice of self-education, is at this point of its development fully conscious of the fact that **at first it perceives itself in the world of pictures — imaginations —** which appear as a result of the exercises described. **Although these pictures appear as living in a new world, the soul must recognize that they are, at the**

outset, nothing but the reflection of its own being, strengthened through the exercises, and it must not only recognize this with proper discretion, but **it must also have developed such a power of will that it can extinguish, can eliminate these pictures from consciousness at any time.** The soul **must be able to act within these pictures completely free and fully aware.** This belongs to true spiritual training at this stage. If the soul were not able to do this it would be in the same circumstances, in the sphere of spiritual experience, in which a soul would find itself in the physical world, were its eyes fettered to the object upon which they gaze, powerless to withdraw them. **Only one group of inner imaginative experiences** constitutes an exception to this possibility of extinction. These experiences **are not to be extinguished at this stage** of spiritual training. They correspond to **the kernel of the soul's own being**, and the student of the spiritual recognizes in these pictures what, in himself, passes through repeated earth lives as his fundamental being. At this point the sensing of repeated earth lives becomes a real experience. In regard to everything else the independence of the experiences mentioned must rule, and only **after having acquired the ability to bring about this extinction does the student approach the true external spiritual world.** In place of what has been extinguished, **something else appears that is recognized as spiritual reality.** The student feels how he grows in his soul from the undefined into the defined. From the self-perception he then must proceed to **an observation of an outer world of soul and spirit.** This takes place when the student arranges his inner experiences in the sense that will be further indicated here.

In the beginning the soul of the student of the spiritual is weak in regard to everything that is to be perceived in the spiritual world. He will have to employ great inner energy in order to hold fast in meditation to the symbols or other visualizations that he has fashioned from the stimuli of the world of the senses. If, however, he wishes besides this **to attain real observation in a higher world, he must be able** [to focus readily upon] these visualizations. After he has done this, [he must] be able **to sojourn in a state in which no stimuli of the sensory world act upon the soul, in which also the visualized imaginations themselves,** characterized above, **are extirpated from consciousness....** It is important now that sufficient inner soul power be present in order really to perceive spiritually what has been formed through meditation, so that it may not elude the attention. This is, however, always the case with weakly developed inner energy. What is thus constructed in the beginning as a soul-spirit organism and what is to be taken hold of by the student in self-perception is delicate and fleeting. [Meanwhile] the disturbances of the outer world of the senses and its after-effects of memory are great, however much we may endeavor to hold them back. **Not only the disturbances that we observe come into question here, [indeed much more, including disturbances which we are not at all conscious of in everyday life].**

The very nature of the human being, however, makes possible **a state of transition** in this regard. **What the soul at the beginning cannot achieve in the waking state on account of the disturbances of the physical world, is possible in the state of sleep.** Whoever surrenders to meditation will, by proper attention, become aware of

something in sleep. **He will feel that during sleep he does not “fall into a complete slumber,” but that at times his soul is active in a certain way while sleeping.** In such states the natural processes hold back the influences of the outer world that the waking soul is not yet able to prevent by means of its own power. If, however, the exercises of meditation have already been effective, **the soul frees itself during sleep from unconsciousness and feels the world of soul and spirit.** This may happen in a twofold way. It may be clear to the human being during sleep that now he is in another world; **or he may have the memory on awaking that he has been in another world.** To the first belongs, indeed, greater inner energy than to the second. Therefore the latter will be **more frequent for the beginner** in spiritual training. By degrees this may go so far that the pupil feels on waking that he has been in another world during the whole sleep period, from which he has emerged on waking, and his memory of the beings and facts of this other world will become ever more definite. Something has taken place for the student of the spiritual in one form or another that may be called the continuity of consciousness. (*The continuity of consciousness during sleep.*) [This does not mean], however, that man is always conscious during sleep. Much has already been gained as continuity of consciousness if the human being (who otherwise sleeps like ordinary man) [has occasional] intervals during sleep in which he can consciously behold a world of soul and spirit, or if he can look back after waking [upon memory that such brief states of consciousness occurred]. It should not be forgotten, however, that what is described here **may be only understood as a transitional state.** It is good to pass through this state in the course of training, but one **should certainly not believe that a conclusive perception in regard to the world of soul and spirit should be derived from it.** The soul is uncertain in this state and cannot yet depend upon what it perceives. But **through such experiences it gathers more and more power in order to succeed, also while awake, in warding off the disturbing influences of the physical outer and inner worlds.** [And thus the soul] acquires the faculty of soul-spirit observation when impressions no longer come through the senses, **when the intellect bound to the physical brain is silent,** and [by this means] the **consciousness is freed even from the [preparatory] visualizations of meditation....** — Whatever spiritual science reveals in this or that form should never originate from any other soul-spirit observation than from one that has been made during the state of complete wakefulness.

Two soul experiences are important in the process of spiritual training. Through the one, man may say to himself, “Although I now disregard all [outer physical world] impressions, nevertheless, I do not look into myself as though at a being in whom all activity is extinguished. [Rather], I look at one who is conscious of himself in a world of which I [can] know nothing so long as I only permit myself to be stimulated by sense impressions and the ordinary impressions of the intellect.” **At this moment the soul has the feeling that it has given birth,** in the manner described above, **to a new being in itself** as the kernel of its soul nature, and this being **possesses characteristics quite different from those that previously existed** in the soul. **The other experience consists in now having the old being like a second alongside the new.** What, up to the present, the student knew as

enclosing him becomes something that now confronts him, in a certain sense. He feels himself at times outside of what he had otherwise called his own being, his ego. It is **as though he now lived in full consciousness in two egos**. One of these is the being he has known up to the present. **The other stands, like a being newly born, above it**. The student feels how the first ego attains a certain independence of the second, just as the body of the human being has a certain independence of the first ego. — This experience is **of great significance**. For through it **the human being knows what it means to live in the world that he strives to reach** through training.

I am tempted to pause and digress upon a discussion of what the Evangelical Christian experiences when he declares himself to have been “born again”. Though it is lifted directly from the words of Jesus in the Gospels, this term really was not in vogue among Christians of any denomination until the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements of the 20th century gained momentum, after the previous period of European mysticism. Had Steiner’s work been dated a couple decades later and located in the United States instead of Europe, he might have adopted terms of speech more familiar to my own Pentecostal religious subculture, for instance, instead of the terminology popularized by the Theosophical Society. Then again, there is surely good reason that it wasn’t so. Perhaps his teaching would have been further marginalized and unable to realize the renaissance of interest among later generations.

The second newborn ego may now be trained to perceive within the spiritual world. There may be developed in this ego what, for the spiritual world, has the same significance that sense organs possess for the sensory-physical world. **If this development has advanced to the necessary stage, then the human being will not only feel himself as a newborn ego, but he will now perceive spiritual facts and spiritual beings in his environment, just as he perceives the physical world through the physical senses. This is a third significant experience.** In order completely to find his way about at this stage of spiritual training the human being must realize that, **with the strengthening of soul powers, self-love and egotism will appear to a degree quite unknown to everyday soul-life**. It would be a misunderstanding if someone were to believe that at this point only ordinary self-love is meant. This self-love increases at this stage of development to such a degree that it assumes the appearance of a nature force within the human soul, and **in order to vanquish this strong egotism a rigorous strengthening of the will is necessary. This egotism is not produced by spiritual training; it is always present; it only comes to consciousness through spiritual experience. The training of the will must go hand in hand with the other spiritual training.** A strong inclination exists to feel enraptured in the world that we have created for ourselves, and we must, in the manner described above, be able to extinguish, as it

were, what we have striven to create with such great effort. **In the imaginative world that has thus been reached the student must [finally] extinguish himself. Against this however, the strongest impulses of egotism wage war.**

The belief may easily arise that the exercises of spiritual training are something external, disregarding the moral evolution of the soul. It must be said concerning this that the moral force that is necessary for the indicated victory over egotism cannot be attained unless the moral condition of the soul is brought to a corresponding level. **Progress in spiritual training is not thinkable without a corresponding moral progress. Without moral force the described victory over egotism is not possible.** All talk about true spiritual training not being at the same time moral training does not conform to facts. Only the person who does not know such an experience can make the following objection: "How are we to know that we are dealing with realities and not with mere visions, hallucinations, and so forth, when we believe we have spiritual perceptions?"

The facts are such, however, that the student who has reached the characterized stage by proper training is able to distinguish his own visualization from spiritual reality. Consider how a man with a healthy mind is able to distinguish the thought of a hot piece of iron from an actual one that he touches with his hand. Healthy experience, and nothing else, shows the difference. In the spiritual world also, life itself is the touchstone. We know that in the sense world the mental picture of a piece of iron, be it thought ever so hot, will not burn the fingers. Just so, **the trained spiritual student knows whether or not he experiences a spiritual fact only in his imaginings or whether real facts or beings make an impression upon his awakened spiritual organs of perception.** The general rules that we must observe during spiritual training in order not to fall victim to illusions in this regard will be described later.

It is of greatest importance that the student of the spiritual has acquired **a quite definite soul state when he becomes conscious of a newborn ego.** For **[it is through his ego that] the human being attains to control of his sensations, feelings, thoughts, instincts, passions, and desires.** Perception and thought cannot be left to themselves in the soul. They must be regulated through attentive thinking. It is the ego that employs these laws of thinking and through them brings order into the life of visualization and thought. It is similar with desires, instincts, inclinations, and passions. **The ethical principles become guides of these soul powers. Through moral judgment the ego becomes the guide** of the soul in this realm. If the human being now draws a higher ego out of his ordinary ego, the lower **becomes independent in a certain sense.** [J]ust as much of living force is withdrawn [from the lower ego] as is bestowed upon the higher ego.

Let us suppose, however, the case in which the human being has not yet developed a sufficient ability and firmness in the laws of thought and in his power of judgment, and he wishes to give birth to his higher ego at this stage of development. He will be able to leave behind for his everyday ego only so much thought power as he has previously developed. If the measure of regulated thinking is too small, then a disordered, confused, fantastic thinking and judgment [will characterize the

independent-grown] ordinary ego. Because the newborn ego can only be weak in such a personality, the disturbed lower ego will gain domination over supersensible perception, and man will not show equilibrium in his power of judgment in observing the supersensible world. If he had developed sufficient ability in logical thinking, he would be able, without fear, to permit the ordinary ego to have its independence.

This is also true in the domain of the ethical. If the human being has not attained firmness in moral judgment, if he has not gained sufficient control over his inclinations, instincts, and passions, then he will make his ordinary ego independent in a state in which these soul powers act. It may happen that the human being in describing the knowledge he has experienced in the supersensible is not governed by the same high sense of truth that guides him in what he brings to his consciousness in the physical outer world. With such **a demoralized sense of truth, he might believe anything to be spiritual reality that in truth is only his own fantastic imagining.** Into this sense of truth **there must act firmness of ethical judgment, certainty of character, keenness of conscience, which are developed in the lower, first ego, before the higher, second ego becomes active** for the purpose of supersensible cognition. — What is said here must not discourage training, but it **must be taken very seriously.**

Anyone who has the strong will to do what brings the first ego to inner certainty in the exercise of its functions need not recoil from the liberation of his second ego, brought about through spiritual training for the sake of supersensible cognition. But he must keep in mind that **self-deception has great power over the human being when it is a question of his feeling himself “mature” enough for some step.** In the spiritual training described here, man attains such a development of his thought life that it is impossible for him to encounter the dangers of going astray, often presumed to be inevitable. This development of thought acts in such a way that all necessary inner experiences appear, but that they occur in the soul without being accompanied by **damaging aberrations of fantasy.** Without corresponding thought development the experiences may call forth a profound uncertainty in the soul. **The method stressed here causes the experiences to appear in such a way that the student becomes completely familiar with them, just as he becomes familiar with the perceptions of the physical world in a healthy soul state.** Through the development of thought life **he becomes, as it were, an observer of what he experiences in himself,** while, without this thought life, he stands heedless within the experience.

In a factual training certain qualities are mentioned that the student who wishes to find his way into the higher worlds should acquire through practice. These are, above all, **control of the soul over its train of thought, over its will, and its feelings.** The way in which this control is **to be acquired through practice has a twofold purpose.** On the one hand, the **soul is to be imbued with firmness, certainty, and equilibrium** to such a degree that it preserves these qualities, although from its being a second ego is born. On the other hand, this **second ego is to be furnished with strength and inner consistency of character.**

What is necessary for the thinking of man **in spiritual training is, above all, objectivity**. In the physical-sensory world, life is the human ego's great teacher of objectivity. Were the soul to let thoughts wander about aimlessly, it would be immediately compelled to let itself be corrected by life if it did not wish to come into conflict with it. The soul must think according to the course of the facts of life. **If now the human being turns his attention away from the physical-sensory world, he lacks the compulsory correction of the latter. If his thinking is then unable to be its own corrective, it must become irrational.** Therefore the thinking of the student of the spiritual **must be trained in such a manner that it is able to give to itself direction and goal**. Thinking must be its own instructor in inner firmness and the capacity to hold the attention strictly to one object. For this reason, suitable "thought exercises" are not to be undertaken with unfamiliar and complicated objects, but with those that are simple and familiar. [A great deal has been achieved by] anyone [who for months at a time] is able to concentrate his thoughts daily (at least for five minutes) upon an ordinary object --for example, a needle, a pencil, or any other simple object. During this time he [should be] able to exclude all thoughts that have no bearing on the subject. [He] may contemplate a new object [each day] or the same one for several days. Also, [anyone] who considers himself a thinker as a result of scientific training should not disdain to prepare himself for spiritual training in this manner. If for a certain length of time we fasten our thoughts upon a [familiar] object, we can be sure that we think in conformity with facts. [Asking] ourselves what a pencil is composed of, how its materials are prepared, how they are brought together afterward, when pencils were invented, and so forth-- this conforms our thoughts more to reality than if we reflect upon the origin of man, or upon the nature of life. Through simple thought exercises we acquire greater ability for factual thinking concerning the Saturn, Sun, and Moon evolutions than through complicated and learned ideas. For in the first place it is not at all a question of thinking about this or that, but of **thinking factually by means of inner force**. When **we have schooled ourselves [regarding] factuality by a physical-sensory process, easily [verified]**, thought becomes accustomed to function in accordance with facts. [This remains true] even though [thinking no longer feels] itself controlled by the physical world of the senses and its laws. [Thus] **we rid ourselves of the habit of letting our thoughts wander without relation to facts**.

The soul must [now] become a ruler in the sphere of the will as it [has learned to be] in the world of thought. In the physical-sensory world, it is life itself that appears as the ruler. It emphasizes this or that need of the human being, and the will feels itself impelled to satisfy these needs. **In higher training man must become accustomed to obey his own commands strictly. He who becomes accustomed to this will be less and less inclined to desire the non-essential.** Dissatisfaction and instability in the life of will rest upon the desire for things the realization of which we cannot conceive clearly. Such dissatisfaction may bring the entire mental life into disorder when a higher ego is about to emerge from the soul. It is a good practice if one gives oneself for months, at a certain time of the day, the following

command: Today, at this definite time, I shall perform this or that action. One then gradually becomes able to determine the time for this action and the nature of the thing to be done so as to permit its being carried out with great exactness. **Thus one lifts oneself above the damaging attitude of mind that says “I should like this, I want that,” [before even considering if it is possible or prudent].... [Instead one has] trained himself to desire what is possible, in order then to be able, through his strong will, to treat the “impossible” so that it is transformed through his will into the possible.**

In regard to the world of feeling [emotion] the soul should attain for spiritual training a certain degree of *calmness*. It is necessary for that purpose that the soul become ruler over expressions of joy and sorrow, of pleasure and pain. It is just in regard to the acquiring of this ability that much prejudice may result. One might imagine that one would become dull and without sympathy in regard to one's fellowmen if one should not feel joy with the joyful and with the painful, pain. Yet this is not the point in question. With the joyful the soul should rejoice, with sadness it should feel pain. But it should **acquire the ability to control the expression of joy and sorrow, of pleasure and pain.** If one endeavors to do this, one will soon notice that one does not become less sensitive, but on the contrary **more receptive to all that is joyous and sorrowful in one's environment** than one was previously. To be sure, if one wishes to acquire the ability with which we are concerned here, one must strictly observe oneself for a long period of time. One must see to it that one is able fully to sympathize with joy and sorrow without losing one's self-control so that one gives way to an involuntary expression of one's feelings. **It is not the justified pain that one should suppress, but involuntary weeping; not the horror of an evil action, but the blind rage of anger; not attention to danger, but fruitless fear, and so forth.** — Only through such practice does the student of the spiritual **attain the tranquillity of mind that is necessary to prevent the soul, [after] the birth of the higher ego, ... from leading a second, abnormal life like a sort of Doppelganger — soul double — along side this higher ego.** It is just in regard to these things that one should not surrender oneself to any sort of self-deception. It may appear to many [that they] already possess a certain equanimity in ordinary life and therefore don't need this exercise. It is just such a person who doubly needs it. **It may be quite possible to be calm when confronting the things of ordinary life, but when one ascends into a higher world, the lack of *equilibrium* that heretofore was only suppressed may assert itself all the more.** It must be grasped that for spiritual training what one already appeared to possess previously is of less importance than the **need to practice, according to exact rules,** what one lacks. Although this sentence appears contradictory, it is, nevertheless, correct. Even though life has taught us this or that, the **abilities we have acquired by [self-discipline] serve the cause of spiritual training.** If life has brought us excitability, we should break ourselves of the habit; **if life has [made us naturally complacent], then we should through self-education arouse ourselves** to such a degree that the expression of the soul corresponds to the impression received. **Anyone who never laughs about**

anything has just as little control of his life as someone who, without any control whatever, is continually given to laughter.

For the control of thought and feeling there is a further means of education in the **acquirement of the faculty that we may call *positiveness***. There is a beautiful legend that tells of how the Christ Jesus, accompanied by some other persons, passed by a dead dog lying on the roadside. While the others turned aside from the hideous spectacle, the Christ Jesus spoke admiringly of the animal's beautiful teeth. One can school oneself in order to attain the [positive] attitude of soul toward the world shown by this legend. The erroneous, the bad, the ugly should not prevent the soul from finding the true, the good, and the beautiful wherever it is present. This positiveness **should not be confused with non-criticism, with the arbitrary closing of the eyes to the bad, the false, and the inferior**. If you admire the "beautiful teeth" of a dead animal, you also see the decaying corpse. But this corpse does not prevent your seeing the beautiful teeth. One cannot consider the bad good and the false true, but it is possible to attain the ability **not to be deterred by evil from seeing good, and by error from seeing truth**.

Thought linked with will undergoes a certain maturing if we permit ourselves never to be robbed by previous experiences of the **unbiased *receptivity* for new experiences**. For the student of the spiritual the following thought should entirely lose its meaning: "I have never heard that, I do not believe that." It should be his aim, during specific periods of time, to learn something new on every occasion from everything and everybody. From every breath of air, from every leaf, from the babbling of children one can learn something if one is prepared to bring to one's aid a certain point of view that one has not made use of up to the present. It will, however, be easily possible in regard to such an ability to go wide of the mark. One should not in any way disregard, at any particular stage of life, one's previous experiences. One should **judge what one experiences in the present by one's experiences of the past**. This is placed upon one scale of the balance; upon the other, **however**, must be placed the inclination of the student continually to experience the new. Above all, **there must be faith in the possibility that new experiences may contradict the old**.

Thus we have named five capacities of the soul that the student must make his own by correct training: Control of the direction of thought; control of the impulses of will; calmness in joy and sorrow; positiveness in judging the world; impartiality in our attitude toward life. Anyone who has employed certain consecutive periods of time for the purpose of acquiring these capacities will still be subject to the necessity of bringing them into harmonious concord in his soul. He will be under **the necessity of practicing them simultaneously**, in pairs, or three and one, and so forth, **in order to bring about harmony**.

The exercises just characterized are indicated by the methods of spiritual training because by being conscientiously carried out they not only effect in the student what has been designated above as a direct result, but indirectly much else follows,

which is needed on the path to the spiritual worlds. **Whoever carries out these exercises to a sufficient degree will encounter in the process many shortcomings and defects in his soul-life, and he will find precisely the means required by him for strengthening and safeguarding his intellectual life, his life of feeling, and his character.** He will certainly have need of many other exercises, according to his abilities, his temperament, and character; such exercises will follow, however, when those named are sufficiently carried out. The student will indeed notice that the exercises described yield, indirectly and by degrees, what did not in the first place appear to be in them. If, for example, someone has too little self-confidence, he will be able to notice after a certain time that through the exercises the necessary self-confidence has developed. It is the same in regard to other soul characteristics. (Special and more detailed exercises may be found in my book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*.)

It is significant that the student of the spiritual be able to increase the indicated abilities to ever higher degrees. He must **bring the control of thought and feeling to such a stage that the soul acquires the power of establishing periods of complete inner tranquillity.** During [such periods], the student holds back from his spirit and heart all that everyday outer life brings of joy and sorrow, of satisfaction and affliction, indeed, of duties and demands. Only those things should enter the soul that the soul itself permits to enter during the state of meditation. In regard to this, a prejudice may easily arise. The opinion might develop that the student might become estranged from life and its duties if he withdraws from it in heart and spirit during certain periods of the day. In reality, however, this is not at all the case. Anyone who surrenders himself [to these] periods of inner tranquillity and peace will [thereby] engender so many and such strong forces for the duties of outer life that as a result he will not, indeed, perform his duties more poorly, but, certainly, in a better fashion.

It is of great benefit if **in such periods the student detaches himself completely from the thoughts of his personal affairs, if he is able to elevate himself to what concerns not only himself but mankind in general.** [Consider one who] is able to fill his soul with communications from the higher spiritual world which arouse his interest to just as high a degree as ... personal troubles or affairs. [This] soul will gather from it fruit of special value.

Whoever, in this way, endeavors to regulate his soul-life will also attain the possibility of **self-observation** through which he observes his own affairs with the same tranquillity as if they were those of others. The **ability to behold one's own experiences, one's own joys and sorrows as though they were the joys and sorrows of others** is a good preparation for spiritual training. One gradually attains the necessary degree of this quality if, after one has finished one's daily tasks, one permits the panorama of one's daily experiences to pass before the eyes of the spirit. One must see oneself in a picture within one's experiences; that is, one **must observe oneself in one's daily life as though from outside.** [This self-observation ability is refined by focusing upon] visualization of detached portions of this daily life [recalling events out of normal order]. One then becomes increasingly clever and skillful in such retrospect, so that, after a longer period of practice, one will be able to form a complete picture within a brief span of time. This looking at one's

experiences backward has a special value for spiritual training for the reason that it brings the soul to a point where it is able to release itself in thinking from the previous habit of merely following in thought the course of everyday events. **In thought-retrospect one visualizes correctly, but one is not held to the sensory course of events. One needs this exercise to familiarize oneself with the spiritual world.** Thought strengthens itself in this way in a healthy manner. It is therefore also good not only to review in retrospect one's daily life, but to **retrace in reverse order, for instance, the course of a drama, a narrative, or a melody.** — More and more [the student determines thereby] to **relate himself to the life events he encounters** in a certain way. [While retaining inner certainty and soul tranquillity] **he allows [events] to approach him and does not judge them according to his soul condition,** but according to their inner significance and their inner value. It is just by looking upon this ideal that he will create for himself the soul basis for [surrendering] himself to the above described meditations on symbolic and other thoughts and feelings.

The **conditions described here must be fulfilled**, because supersensible experience is built upon the foundation on which one stands in everyday soul life before one enters the supersensible world. In a twofold manner all supersensible experience is dependent upon the starting point at which the soul stands before it enters into this world. **Anyone who, from the beginning, does not consider making a healthy judgment the foundation of his spiritual training will develop in himself supersensible faculties with which he perceives the spiritual world in exactly and incorrectly.** His spiritual organs of perception will, so to speak, unfold incorrectly. Just as one cannot see correctly in the sense world with eyes that are faulty and diseased, one cannot perceive correctly with spiritual organs that have not been constructed upon the foundation of a healthy capacity for judgment. — Whoever makes the start with an immoral soul condition elevates himself to the spiritual world in a way by which **his spiritual perception becomes stupefied and clouded.** He stands confronting the supersensible worlds like someone observing the sensory world in a stupor. Such a person will, to be sure, make no important statements. The spiritual observer in his state of stupor is, **however, more awake than a human being in everyday consciousness.** His assertions, therefore, will become errors in regard to the spiritual world.

This warning underlines the temptation to make more of ASP perceptions than warranted. A person feels, indeed, that he is more awake than during daily life. Therefore, it seems reasonable, in some cases, to assign a higher value to what is seen and heard on the nonmaterial side of experience. It becomes an even greater challenge as one comes to realize, scientifically, that the truly enduring realities of existence are found in the spiritual rather than transitive physical phenomena.

Excellence in this stage of *imaginative cognition* [may be realized as] the soul meditations described are [further] supported by ... **familiarizing oneself with sense-free thought [content]**. If one forms a thought based upon observation in the physical sense world, this thought is not sense-free. It is not a fact, however, that man is able only to form [material] thoughts. Human [thinking is not necessarily] empty or without content when [purged of thoughts resulting from] sense-observations. The safest and most evident way for the student of the spiritual to acquire such sense-free thought is **to make his own, in thinking, the facts of the higher world that are communicated to him by spiritual science**. It is not possible to observe [spiritual] facts by means of the physical senses. Nevertheless, the student will notice that [spiritual facts] can be grasped mentally **if he has sufficient patience and persistence**. We are not able to carry on research in the higher worlds without training, nor can we make [direct] observations in that world. Yet **[even] without higher training we are able to understand the descriptions of spiritual researchers**. If someone asks, “How can I accept in good faith what these researchers say since I am unable to perceive the spiritual world myself?” then this is completely unfounded. For it is entirely possible merely **by reflecting on what is given, to attain the certain conviction that what is communicated is true**. If anyone is unable to form this conviction through reflection, **it is not** because it is **impossible to believe something one cannot see**, but solely because his reflection has not been sufficiently thorough, comprehensive and unprejudiced. In order to gain clarity in regard to this point we must realize that human thinking, when it arouses itself with inner energy, is able to comprehend more than is usually presumed. For **in thought itself an inner entity is already present that is connected with the supersensible world**. The soul is usually not conscious of this connection because it is accustomed to developing the thought faculty only by employing it in the sense world. It therefore regards communications from the super-sensible world as something incomprehensible. These communications, however, are not only comprehensible to a mode of thinking taught through spiritual training, but for every sort of **thinking that is fully conscious of its own power** and that wishes to employ it. — By making what spiritual research offers increasingly one's own, one accustoms oneself to a mode of thinking that does not derive its content from sense-observations. **We learn to recognize how, in the inner reaches of the soul, thought weaves into thought, how thought seeks thought**, although the thought **associations are not effected by the power of sense-observation**. The essential in this is the fact that one becomes aware of how the thought world has an inner life, of how, **by really thinking, one finds oneself already in the region of a living supersensible world**. One says to oneself, “There is something in me that fashions a thought [organ]; I am, nevertheless, at one with this something.” By surrendering oneself to sense-free thinking **one becomes conscious of the existence of something essential flowing into our inner life**, just as the characteristics of sense objects flow into us through the medium of our physical organs when we observe by means of our senses. The observer of the sense world says to himself, “Outside in space there is a rose; it is not strange to me, for it makes itself known to me through its color and fragrance.” One needs now only to be sufficiently unprejudiced in order to say to oneself when sense-free thinking acts

in one, **“Something real proclaims its presence in me that binds thought to thought, fashioning a thought [organ].”** But the sensations experienced by observing the objects of the outer sense world are different from the sensations experienced when spiritual reality manifests itself in sense-free thinking. The observer of sense objects experiences the rose as something external to himself. The observer who has surrendered himself to sense-free thought **feels the spiritual reality announcing itself as though it existed within him, he feels himself one with it.** Whoever only admits as real (consciously or not) what confronts him like an external object, will naturally not be able to have this feeling. He cannot say, “Whatever has the nature of being in itself may also announce itself to me by my being united with it as though I were one with it.” In order in this regard **to see correctly**, one must be able to have the following inner experience. One must learn **to distinguish between the thought associations one creates arbitrarily and those one experiences in oneself ... this arbitrary volition [is silenced].** In the latter case one may then say, “I remain quite silent within myself; I produce no thought associations; I surrender myself to what ‘thinks in me.’ ” Then one is fully justified in saying, **“Something possessing the nature of being acts within me.”** Just so, one is justified in saying, “A rose acts upon me when I see its red color, when I smell its fragrance.” — In this connection, there lies no contradiction in the fact that the content of one's thoughts is derived from the communications of the spiritual researcher. The thoughts are, indeed, already present when one surrenders to them; but one cannot think them if one does not, in every case, re-create them anew within the soul. What is important is the fact that **the spiritual researcher calls up thoughts in his listeners and readers that they must first draw forth out of themselves**, while the one who describes sense reality points to something that may be observed by listeners and readers in the sense world.

(The path is absolutely safe upon which the communications of spiritual science lead us to sense-free thinking. There is, however, still another path that is safer and above all more exact, but it is also more difficult for many human beings. This path is presented in my books, *A Theory of Knowledge Based on Goethe's World Conception*, and *Philosophy of Freedom*. These writings offer what human thought can acquire if thinking does not give itself up to the impressions of the physical-sensory world, but only to itself. It is then **pure thought, which acts in the human being like a living entity, and not thought that merely indulges in memories of the sensory.** In the writings mentioned above nothing is inserted from the communications of spiritual science itself. Yet it is shown that **pure thinking, merely active within itself, may throw light on the problems of world, life, and man.** These writings stand at **an important point intermediate between cognition of the sense world and [direct observation] of the spiritual world.** They offer what thinking can gain when it elevates itself above sense-observation, while still avoiding entering upon spiritual research. Whoever permits these writings to act upon his entire soul nature, stands already within the spiritual world; it presents itself to him, however, as a world of thought. He who feels himself in the position to permit such an intermediate stage to act upon him, travels **a safe path**, and

through it he is **able to gain a feeling toward the higher world that will bear for him the most beautiful fruit** throughout all future time.)

The object of meditation on the previously characterized symbolic mental images and feelings is, correctly speaking, **the development of the higher organs of perception within the human astral body**. They are **created from the substance of this astral body**. These new organs of observation **open up a new world**, and in this new world **man becomes acquainted with himself as a new ego**. The new organs of observation are to be distinguished from the organs of the physical sense world through the fact of their being active organs. **Whereas eyes and ears remain passive**, permitting light and sound to act upon them, the **soul-spirit organs of perception are continually active** while perceiving and they **seize upon their objects and facts, as it were, in full consciousness**. This results in the feeling that **soul-spirit cognition is the act of uniting with the corresponding facts**, really a **“living within them.”** — The **soul-spirit organs** that are being individually developed may, by way of comparison, be **called “lotus flowers,”** according to the **forms which they present imaginatively to supersensible consciousness**. (Granted, it must be clear that such a designation has nothing more to do with the case than the expression “chamber” has to do with the case when we speak of the “chamber of the heart.”) Through quite definite methods of inner meditation the astral body is affected in such a way that one or another of the soul-spirit organs, one or another of the “lotus flowers,” is formed. After all that has been described in this book it ought to be superfluous to accentuate the fact that these “organs of observation” are not to be imagined as something that, in the mental representation of its sense-image, is a picture of its reality. **These “organs” are supersensible** and consist of a definitely formed soul activity; they exist only as far and as long as this soul activity is practiced. The existence of these organs in the human being **produces nothing of a sensory character** any more than human thinking produces some sort of a physical “vapor.” Whoever insists on visualizing the supersensory as something sensory becomes involved in misunderstandings.... speaks of “lotus flowers” as though they were delicate, physical structures. Every correct meditation that is made in regard to imaginative cognition has its effect upon one or another organ. (In my book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, certain methods of meditation, and exercises that affect one or another of the organs, are outlined.) **Proper training sets up the several exercises** of the student of the spiritual and arranges them to follow one another **so that the organs are able to develop** correspondingly, either singly, in groups, or consecutively. In connection with this development **the spiritual student must have great patience and endurance**. Anyone having only the measure of patience possessed, as a rule, by most human beings through the ordinary relationships of life will find that this does not suffice. For **it takes a long time, often a very long time, before the organs are sufficiently developed** to permit their employment by the spiritual student in perceiving the spiritual world. This is the moment **when something occurs for him that may be called illumination**, in contrast to the preparation or purification consisting of the exercises that develop the organs. (We speak of purification, because the corresponding exercises purify the student in a certain sphere of his

inner life of all that springs only from the sensory world of observation.) **It may happen that the student, even before his actual illumination occurs, may experience repeatedly “flashes of light” coming from a higher world. He should accept such experiences gratefully. Through them he can already become a witness for the spiritual world.** But he should not waver if this does not occur during this period of preparation, which may perhaps seem to him altogether too long. If he exhibits any impatience whatever “because he does not yet see anything,” he has not yet gained **the right attitude** toward a higher world. This attitude **can only be grasped by someone for whom the exercises performed in his training can be, as it were, an end in themselves.** These exercises are, in truth, work performed on the soul-spirit nature, that is to say, on the student's own astral body, and **although he “sees nothing,” he may “feel” that he is working on his soul-spirit nature.** If, however, one forms a definite opinion right at the beginning of what one actually expects to “see,” one will not have this feeling. Then one will consider as nothing what in truth is of immeasurable significance. But **one should be subtly observant of everything one experiences during the exercises and that is so fundamentally different from all experiences in the sense world.** One will then certainly notice that one's astral body, upon which one is working, is not a neutral substance, but that in it there lives a totally different world of which one knows nothing in one's life of the senses. **Higher beings are working upon the astral body, just as the outer physical-sensory world works upon the physical body,** and one encounters this higher life in one's own astral body if one does not close oneself to it. If someone repeatedly says to himself, “I perceive nothing!” then, in most cases, he has imagined that spiritual perception must take place in this or that manner, and because he does not perceive what he imagines he should see, he says, “I see nothing!”

If the student has acquired the right attitude toward the **exercises of spiritual training,** they **will constitute something for him that he loves more and more for its own sake.** He then knows that **through the practice itself he stands in a world of soul and spirit,** and with patience and serenity he awaits what will result. This attitude may arise in the consciousness of the student most favorably in the following words, “I will do everything that is proper in the way of exercises, and **I know that just as much will come to me at the proper time as is important for me.** I do not demand it impatiently, but I am ever ready to receive it.”

It is not valid to object that “the spiritual student must thus grope about in the dark, perhaps for an immeasurably long time; for he can only know clearly that he is on the right path in his exercises when the results appear.” It is untrue that only results can bring knowledge of the correctness of the exercises. If the student takes the right attitude toward them, he finds that the satisfaction he draws from the practice gives him the assurance that what he is doing is right; he does not have to wait for the results. **Correct practice in the sphere of spiritual training calls forth satisfaction that is not mere satisfaction, but knowledge** that is to say, the knowledge that he is doing something which convinces him **that he is making progress in the right direction.** Every spiritual student may have this knowledge

at every moment, **provided he is subtly attentive to his [extra-sensory] experiences.** If he does not employ this attention then the experiences escape him, as is the case with a pedestrian who, lost in thought, does not see the trees on both sides of the road, although he would see them were he to direct his attention to them. — **It is not at all desirable that a result be hastened** different from the one that must always occur from correct practice. For this result **might easily be only the smallest part of what should actually appear.** In regard to spiritual development a partial success is often the reason for a strong retardation of the complete success. The movement among such forms of spiritual life that correspond to the **partial success dulls the sensitivity in regard to the influences of the forces that lead to higher stages** of evolution. **What we may have gained by having “peered” into the spirit world is only an illusion, for this “peering” cannot furnish the truth, but only a mirage.**

I suspect that ASP experiences are indeed in the class of the “flashes of light” highlighted above. At the same time that they orient us to stand as witnesses to the spiritual world, these flashes may also disable or retard experiencers in the manner outlined when it comes to grasping the full import of spiritual fact made suddenly apprehensible. Much of our observations, being only a partial success—as the apostle Paul described it, peering through a darkened window—are only part-truth, a mirage, a teasing lure to dare believe that there is really something out there. Even some ASP sojourners, insist, as Steiner notes, that fact can only be fact when grounded in material sense observations.

And here is where I must acknowledge gratefully my Christian heritage and commitment. The disciplines of heart, soul and mind presented in the Gospels and Epistles of New Testament scriptures are the very same “exercises” outlined by Steiner. Their method and object are virtually identical. Christians are likewise taught to pursue the way or path of the Spirit of Christ for its own sake, to please “the Father”. This heavenly Father is the newly realized higher Self ever-present within my inner world, my self as son being transformed daily to resemble more and more the revealed inner Being of Jesus Christ, the “first fruit”, first-born Son or prime example of abundant life. For further reward, we are told simply to wait, and the Spirit will come to manifest itself at the right time.

The **psycho-spiritual organs**, the lotus flowers, are fashioned so as to appear to supersensible consciousness ... [near] certain organs of the physical body. From among these soul organs the following will be mentioned here. First, the one that is felt between the eyebrows — the so-called two-petalled lotus flower; the one [near] the larynx — the sixteen-petalled lotus flower; a third in the heart region — the

twelve-petalled lotus flower; a fourth in the region of the solar plexus. Other similar organs appear in the neighborhood of other parts of the physical body. (The names “two-petalled” or “sixteen-petalled” may be used because the corresponding organs may be **likened to flowers of a corresponding number of petals.**)

One becomes conscious of the lotus flowers through the astral body. The moment [a student] has developed one or another of these organs, he is aware of its existence. He feels that he can employ it and through its use really enter into a higher world. **The impressions [received] from [the spiritual] world still resemble in many ways those of the physical-sensory world.** He who possesses imaginative cognition will be able to speak of the new, higher world in such a way that he **designates the impressions as sensations of heat or cold, as perceptions of tones and words, as effects of light and color, for he experiences them as such. But he is aware that these perceptions in the imaginative world express something quite different from sense reality. He recognizes that behind them stand not physical material, but soul-spirit causes.** If he experiences something like an impression of heat, he does not, for instance, ascribe it to a piece of hot iron, but he considers it the outflow of a soul process that, up to the present, he has only known in his inner soul-life. He knows that behind imaginative perceptions stand soul and spiritual things and processes just as behind physical perceptions stand material physical beings and facts. — Beside this similarity of the imaginative with the physical world there is, however, a significant difference. **Certain phenomena in the physical world appear quite different in the imaginative world. In the former can be observed [cycles of] growth and decay of things, an alternation of birth and death. In the imaginative world a continual [simultaneous] transformation of one thing into another takes the place of these phenomena.** One sees, for example, the decay of a plant in the physical world. In the imaginative world, in proportion to the withering of the plant the growth of another formation makes its appearance that is not perceptible physically and into which the decaying plant is gradually transformed. When the plant has disappeared, this formation stands completely developed in its place. **Birth and death are ideas that lose their significance in the imaginative world. In their place appears the concept of transformation of one thing into another.** — Because this is so, the truths about the being of man become accessible to imaginative cognition, truths that have been described in Chapter 2 of this book, entitled “The Essential Nature of Mankind.” **To physical-sensory perception only the processes of the physical body are perceptible.** They occur in the “region of birth and death.” The other members of human nature — **life body, sentient body, and ego — come under the law of transformation,** and perception of them is acquired through imaginative cognition. Whoever has advanced to this point perceives the releasing itself from the physical body of what **at death continues to live on in another state of existence.**

Development, however, does not stop with the imaginative world. **The human being who might wish to stop in this world would perceive the beings undergoing transformation, but he would be unable to explain the processes of transformation; he would be unable to orientate himself in the newly attained**

world. The imaginative world is an unstable region. In it there exist everywhere constant motion and transformation; nowhere are there points of rest. Such points of rest are attained by man only when he has developed himself **beyond the stage of imaginative cognition** to the stage that may be called **“cognition through inspiration.”** — It is not necessary that a person who seeks cognition of the supersensible world develop himself in such a way that he advance first to the possession of a full degree of imaginative cognition, and then only advance to “Inspiration.” His exercises may be so arranged that what may lead to imagination and to inspiration proceeds hand in hand. He will then, after a certain time, enter a higher world in which he not only perceives, but in which he is able to orientate himself, and which he can interpret. To be sure, this progress will, as a rule, be of such a character that first of all some of the phenomena of the imaginative world manifest themselves to him; then after a time he will experience the feeling, “Now I am beginning to orientate myself.” — The world of inspiration is, nevertheless, something quite new in comparison with the world of mere imagination. Through the latter one perceives the transformation of one process into another; through the former one learns to know the inner qualities of beings who transform themselves. **Through imagination one learns to know the [symbolic] soul-expression of beings; through inspiration one [begins to] penetrates into their inner spiritual nature.** One recognizes above all a host of spiritual beings **and discerns a great number of relationships between one being and another.** One has to deal with a multitude of individual beings also in the physical-sensory world; in the world of inspiration, however, this multitude is of a different character. There **each being has a quite definite relationship to others**, not as in the physical world through external influences, but **through its inner constitution.** If we perceive a being in the world of inspiration, there is **no evidence of an outer influence upon another being, which might be compared with the effect of one physical being upon another**, but a relationship exists between two beings through their inner constitution. Let us compare this relationship with a relationship in the physical world, by selecting for comparison the relationship between the separate sounds or letters of a word. Take, for instance, the word “man.” It is produced through the concordance of the sounds m-a-n. There is no impulse or other external influence passing over from the m to the a; both sounds act together within the whole through their inner constitution. Therefore **observation in the world of inspiration may only be compared with reading. The beings in the world of inspiration act upon the observer like the letter [sounds] of an alphabet, which he must learn to know and the interrelationships of which must unfold themselves to him like a supersensible script. Spiritual science, therefore, may call cognition through inspiration — speaking figuratively — the reading of secret or occult script.**

How we may read by means of this occult script, and how we may communicate what is read, will now be made clear by means of the preceding chapters of this book itself. How the human being takes shape out of various members was described at the very outset. It was then shown how the cosmic being, within which the human being develops, passes through the various states of Saturn, Sun, Moon, and Earth. The perceptions through which one can, on the one hand, cognize the

members of the human being and, on the other, the consecutive states of the Earth and its preceding transformations, disclose themselves to imaginative knowledge. It is, however, also necessary that it be known what relationships exist between the Saturn state and the human physical body, the Sun state and the ether body, and so forth. It must be shown that the germinal human physical body has come already into existence during the Saturn state, and that it has evolved further to its present form during the Sun, Moon, and Earth states. It was necessary to show also, for example, what transformations have taken place within the human being as a result of the separation of the sun from the Earth, and similarly through the separation of the moon. It was necessary also to describe the powers and beings who co-operated in order that such transformations could occur in humanity as are expressed in the transformations during successive [cultural] periods --the Atlantean period, the ancient Indian, the ancient Persian, the Egyptian cultures, and the subsequent periods of culture. The description of these relationships does not result from imaginative perception, but from cognition through inspiration, by reading the occult script. **For this sort of “reading” the perceptions of *imagination* are like [individual disconnected] letter symbols or sounds.** This “reading,” however, is not only necessary for the purpose of explaining what has just been described, but it would be **impossible to understand the life course of the whole human being were it only perceived through imaginative cognition.** One would perceive, indeed, how the soul-spiritual members are released at death from what remains in the physical world, but one would not understand the relationships between what happens to the human being after death and the preceding and succeeding states, were one unable to orientate oneself within the imaginatively perceived.. **Without cognition through *inspiration* the imaginative world would remain like writing at which we stare but which we cannot read [or comprehend the connected words].**

When the student of the spiritual advances from imagination to inspiration he soon sees how incorrect it would be to relinquish the **understanding of the macrocosmic phenomena** and to limit himself only to facts that, so to say, touch upon immediate human interests. Someone who is not initiated into these things might well say the following. “It appears to me only necessary to learn about the fate of the human soul after death; if I am told something about that, it will suffice. So why does spiritual science wish to demonstrate such distant things as the Saturn or Sun state, and the sun and moon separation, and so forth?” Anyone properly informed about these things learns that real knowledge of what he wishes to know is never acquired without an understanding of what seems to him so unnecessary. **A description of the human states after death remains completely unintelligible and worthless if man is unable to connect them with concepts that are derived from such remote matters.** Even the simplest observation of the scientist of the supersensible makes his acquaintance with such things necessary. If, for example, a plant makes the transition from blossom to fruit, the human observer of the supersensible sees a transformation taking place in an astral being that during the period of flowering has overshadowed the plant from above and enclosed it like a cloud. Had the fructification not occurred, then this astral being would have made a

transition into quite a different shape from the one it has assumed in consequence of fructification. Now one understands the entire process perceived by supersensible observation, if one has learned to understand its nature through the macrocosmic process through which the Earth and all its inhabitants have passed at the time of the sun separation. Before fructification, the plant is in a position similar to the entire Earth prior to the sun separation. After fructification, the plant blossom shows itself in a condition similar to the Earth after the sun had severed itself and the moon forces were still present in it. If one has made one's own the concepts that may be gained by studying the sun separation, one then understands adequately the meaning of the process of plant fructification. One will say that the plant is in a sun state before fructification, in a moon state after it. For it is a fact that **even the smallest process in the world may be grasped only if we recognize that it constitutes a copy of macrocosmic processes.** Otherwise its very nature remains unintelligible, just as Raphael's Madonna would remain unintelligible if nothing were to be seen but a small blue speck when the rest of the picture were covered up. **Everything that occurs in the human being is a copy of macrocosmic processes** that have to do with his existence. If one wishes to understand the observations of supersensible consciousness concerning the phenomena occurring between birth and death, and again between death and rebirth, one can do this if one has acquired the faculty of deciphering the imaginative observations through the concepts acquired by the study of the macrocosmic processes. — This study gives us the key to the comprehension of human life. **Therefore, in the sense of spiritual science, observation of Saturn, Sun, and Moon is at the same time observation of man.**

Through inspiration one acquires the knowledge of the relationships between the beings of the higher world. It is possible through a higher stage of cognition to [directly] understand the inner nature of the beings themselves. This stage of cognition may be designated *intuitive cognition*. (Intuition is a word misused in everyday life for an obscure, uncertain insight into a fact, that is, for a certain idea which at times agrees with truth but the justification of which is at the time not provable. What is meant here has naturally nothing to do with this sort of intuition. Intuition denotes here a cognition of the highest, most illuminating clarity, and, if one has it, one is conscious in the fullest sense of its justification.) — **To have knowledge of a sense-being means to stand outside it and to judge it according to the external impression. To have knowledge of a spiritual being through intuition means to have become completely one with it, to have *become united with its inner nature*.** Step by step the student of the spiritual ascends to such knowledge. Imagination leads him to sense the perceptions no longer as outer characteristics of beings, but to recognize in them the outpouring of something psycho-spiritual; **inspiration leads him further into the inner nature of beings. He learns through it to understand what these beings are to each other; with intuition he penetrates into the beings themselves.** — The significance of intuition also may be shown by the descriptions given in this book. In the preceding chapters, not only the course of Saturn, Sun, and Moon evolutions was described, but it was told that beings participate in this development in the most varied ways. Thrones or Spirits of Will, Spirits of Wisdom, of Motion, and others were

mentioned. In the Earth evolution mention was made of the spirits Lucifer and Ahriman. The construction of the cosmos was traced back to the beings who participate in it. What may be learned about these beings is won through intuitive cognition.

*One distinctive component of ASP, shared in common by most sufferers, is the inexplicable sense of another presence, usually predatory and even malevolent. The sense is described as evident, a perceivable separate entity, even before that presence shapes itself into a visible form, sound, voice or tactile feeling (paws or claws, pokes, pressure, strangling or other bodily assault, often sexual). While the sufferer remains trapped by sleep paralysis, the threat of assault, beginning with this unexplainable knowledge of an evil presence, is especially terrifying. This terror progresses to mindless panic as the entity manifests itself further. That it may only be dream or hallucination is no comfort or remedy. I suspect rather that this **sense of presence** is the untimely awakening of faculties native to one's spiritual body, intended by their Creator to locate and identify other beings in the nonmaterial environments, entities who do not necessarily have a physically perceivable appearance.*

This faculty [of intuition] is also necessary if one wishes to have a knowledge of the course of human life. What is released after death from the human bodily nature goes through various states in the subsequent period. The states directly after death might be described in some measure through imaginative cognition. What, however, takes place when man advances further into the period between death and rebirth would have to remain quite unintelligible to imaginative cognition, if inspiration did not come to the rescue. Only inspiration is able to discover what may be said about the life of man in the land of spirits after purification. Then **something appears for which inspiration no longer suffices**, where it reaches, so to say, the limits of understanding. There is **a period in human evolution between death and rebirth** when the being of man is accessible only to intuition. This part of the being of man, however, is always present in him; and **if we wish to understand it according to its true inner nature, we must investigate it by means of intuition also in the period between birth and death.** Whoever wished to fathom the nature of man by means of imagination and inspiration alone, would miss the innermost processes of his being that take place from incarnation to incarnation. **Only intuitive cognition, therefore, makes possible an adequate research into repeated earth lives and into karma.** The truth communicated about these processes must originate from research by means of intuitive cognition. — **If man himself wishes to have a knowledge of his own inner being, he can only acquire this through intuition.** By means of it he perceives what progresses in him from earth life to earth life.

I have explained elsewhere (see also my Introduction to Anthroposophy) Steiner's use of the borrowed words 'karma' or 'reincarnation' or phrases such as 'repeated earth lives'. (Likewise has he borrowed and sought to redeem words like 'evolution' and 'force' to designate processes very different from what material scientific theorists may describe.) He does not endorse the Hindu, Confucian or more modern New Age ideas of reincarnation, where individuals are said to return as lower or higher physical beings, animal, human or god. Each human person is one embodiment of the developing spiritual man, born twice (as a rule, once male and once female) into each cultural age of this Earth cycle. It is only as the lower body-borne soul (as an individual personality) awakens to the higher spirit-born soul that one realizes the need to yield himself to the spirit's guidance. To the extent he is able to so yield and grow eternal character, the fruit of development during this physical sojourn is preserved and that soul identity is 'saved' (as modern Christianity terms it) or rescued from oblivion of an unfruitful wasted earth life (like chaff separated from wheat). And so each physical soul identity endures one life, one death and judgment to determine its role (if any) in furthering the eternal spirit's development of an enduring spiritualized soul identity. This final determination --after the memory review and purging processes (purgatory; cleansing by fire) described as following physical death-- is termed 'karma' in Steiner's cosmology.

Man is able to attain knowledge by means of inspiration and intuition only through soul-spirit exercises. They resemble those that have been described as meditation for the attainment of imagination. While, however, those **exercises that lead to imagination are linked to the impressions of the sensory-physical world, this link must disappear more and more in the exercises for inspiration.** In order to make clear ... what has to happen there, let a person consider again the symbol of the rose cross. If he ponders upon this symbol he has an image before him, the parts of which have been taken from the impressions of the sense world: the black color of the cross, the roses, and so forth. The combining of these parts into a rose cross has not been taken from the physical sense world. [Consider] if now the student of the spirit attempts to let the black cross and also the red roses as pictures of sense realities disappear entirely from his consciousness. [If he were] **only to retain in his soul the spiritual activity** that has combined these parts, then he has a means for meditation that leads him by degrees to inspiration. One may place the following question before one's soul. What have I done inwardly in order to combine cross and rose into a symbol? What I have done — my own soul process — I wish to hold fast to; I **let the picture itself**, however, **disappear from consciousness.** Then I wish to feel within me all that my soul has done in order to

bring the image into existence, but I do not wish to hold the image itself; I wish to live quite inwardly within my own activity, which has created the image. Thus, **I do not intend to meditate on an image, but to dwell in my own image-creating soul activity**. Such meditation must be carried out in regard to many symbols. This then **leads to cognition through inspiration**. Another example would be the following. One meditates on the thought of a growing and decaying plant. One allows to arise in the soul the image of a slowly growing plant as it shoots up out of the seed, as it unfolds leaf on leaf, until it develops flower and fruit. Then again, one meditates on how it begins to fade until its complete dissolution. One acquires gradually by meditating on such an image a feeling of [the distinction between] growth and decay for which the plant remains a mere symbol. From this feeling, if this exercise is continued with perseverance, there may arise the imagination of the transformation that underlies physical growth and decay. If one wishes, however, to attain the corresponding state of inspiration, one has to carry out the exercise differently. The student must recall his own soul activity that has gained the visualization of growth and decay from the image of the plant. He must now let the plant disappear completely from consciousness and only meditate upon what he has himself done inwardly.

Only through such exercises is it possible to ascend to inspiration. In the beginning it will not be entirely easy for the student of the spirit to comprehend completely how he should go about such an exercise. The reason for this is that **the human being who is accustomed to have his inner life determined by outer impressions immediately finds himself uncertain and wavering when he has to unfold a soul-life that has discarded all connection with outer impressions**. In a still higher degree than in the acquiring of imagination the student must be clear, in regard to these **exercises that lead to inspiration**. **He ought only to carry them out when he accompanies them with all those precautionary measures that can lead to safeguarding and strengthening of his power of discrimination, his life of feeling, and his character**. If he takes these precautions, then he will have a **twofold result: Firstly ... he will not lose the equilibrium of his personality during supersensible perception. Secondly ... he will gain the faculty of being able actually to carry out what is required** in these exercises. He will maintain in regard to them that they are difficult only so long as he has not yet acquired **a quite definite soul condition, [distinctive] feelings and sensations**. He will soon gain understanding and also ability for the exercises, if in patience and perseverance he fosters in his soul such inner faculties as favor **the unfolding of supersensible knowledge**. If he grows accustomed to withdrawing into himself frequently in such a way that he is less concerned with brooding on himself than with quietly arranging and working over his life-experiences, he will gain much. He will see that his thoughts and feelings are enriched if he brings one life-experience into relationship with another. He will become aware to what a high degree he experiences something new not only by having new impressions and new experiences, but also by permitting the old to work in him. If he ... lets his experiences --indeed, even his acquired opinions-- play back and forth as though he were not at all involved in them with his sympathies and antipathies (his personal

interests and feelings), he will prepare an especially good soil for the forces of supersensible cognition. **He will develop, in truth, what may be called a rich inner life. The question of chief importance here, however, is equanimity and equilibrium of the soul qualities. Man is only too easily inclined, if he surrenders himself to a certain soul activity, to fall into one-sidedness.** For example, if he becomes aware of the advantage of inner meditation and of dwelling in his own thought world, he may develop such an inclination toward it that **he begins to shut himself off from the impressions of the outer world.** This, however, **leads to the withering and devastation of the inner life.** Those go the farthest who preserve, alongside the ability to withdraw inwardly, an open receptivity to all impressions of the outer world. One need not think here merely of the so-called important impressions of life, **but every man in every situation — even in the poorest surroundings — may have sufficient experiences if he only keeps his mind sufficiently receptive. One need not seek the experiences; they are present everywhere.**

Of special importance also is the way experiences are transformed in the human soul. For example, somebody may discover that a person revered by him or others has this or that quality that may be viewed as a fault of character. Such an experience may cause the human being to meditate in a twofold manner. He may simply say to himself, “Now, that I have recognized this fault, I can no longer revere this person in the same way as formerly.” Or he may pose the following question to himself, “How does it happen that this revered person is afflicted with this fault? Should I not consider that this fault is not merely a fault, but something due to the circumstances of this person's life, perhaps even to his great capacities?” A human being posing this question to himself will perhaps arrive at the result that his reverence is not in the least to be decreased by the discovery of such a fault. He will have learned something every time he goes through such an experience; he will have added something to his understanding of life. [On the other hand, it would] certainly be disastrous ... to let himself be misled by the merit of such a view of life, to [preferentially] excuse everything he possibly can in people or things [he happens to like]. [It is disastrous to form such a habit] of disregarding all faults [arguing that] it brings him advantage for his inner development. This will not be the case if he has the subjective impulse not merely to censure faults but to understand them; it will occur when this attitude is demanded by the case in question, regardless of the gain or loss to him who judges. **It is entirely correct that one cannot learn through condemning faults, but only through understanding them. If, however, because of understanding, one should entirely exclude disapproval, one would not get very far either.** Here also it is **not a question of one-sidedness** in either direction, **but of equanimity and equilibrium of the soul powers.**

It is especially so with a soul quality that is of great significance for the development of the human being; this is what is called **the feeling of reverence or devotion.** Those who have developed this feeling in themselves or possess it from the outset through a fortunate gift of nature have an excellent basis for the forces of

supersensible knowledge. The person who in childhood or youth has been **able to look up with self-surrendering admiration to personalities as though to high ideals**, possesses something at the foundation of his soul in which supersensible cognition thrives especially well. And whoever with mature judgment in later life looks upon the starry heavens and **feels with wonder in complete surrender the revelation of exalted powers** makes himself thus mature for knowledge of supersensible worlds. Something similar is the case with those who are able **to admire the forces ruling in human life**, and it is not of little importance if we, even as mature human beings, can have reverence to the highest degree for other men whose worth we divine or believe we know. Only where such reverence is present can the view into the higher world open up. **The person who is unable to revere will in no way advance very far in his knowledge. Whoever does not wish to acknowledge anything [wonderful] in the world will find that the essential nature of things is closed to him.**

The person, however, who permits himself to be misled, through an unrestrained feeling of reverence and surrender, to deaden ... a healthy consciousness of self and self-confidence, [he] sins against the law of equanimity and equilibrium. The student will continually work on himself in order to make himself more and more mature; he is then justified in having confidence in his own personality and in having faith that its powers will continually increase. If he achieves correct feelings in this direction, he may say to himself, "In me there lie hidden forces and I can draw them forth from my inner being. Therefore, when I see something that I must revere because it stands above me, **I need not only revere it, but I may hope to develop myself to such a degree that I become similar to what I revere.**"

The greater the capacity of a human being to direct his attention to certain [less familiar life processes] ... the greater the possibility for him to lay the foundation for [spiritual] development. An example may make this clear. A man is in a certain situation in life where he [must choose:] perform a certain deed or leave it undone. His judgment suggests to him: Do this! But there may be a certain inexplicable something in his feelings that holds him back from the deed. Now it may be that he does not pay any attention to [the inexplicable restraint], but simply performs the deed [as his limited judgement dictates]. Or he may surrender to the [inexplicable prompting] and leave the deed undone. If he then follows up the matter further it becomes evident that evil would have been the result had he followed his [own] judgment; by non-performance of the deed, a blessing has ensued. Such an experience may lead man's thoughts into a [prescribed] direction. He may say to himself, "Something lives in me that is a better guide than my present capacity of judgment. I must hold my mind open to this something in me that [my normal judgment is yet unable to access]." **The soul is benefited to the highest degree when it directs its attention toward [the inexplicable] occurrences in life. It then becomes aware, as though in a state of healthy premonition, that something exists in man that transcends his present ability to judge.** Through such attention the human being directs his efforts toward an extension of soul-life,

but here also it is possible that one-sidedness may result that is dangerous.

Whoever were to form the habit of disregarding his judgment because his “premonitions” impel him to this or that, would become the plaything of all sorts of uncertain impulses, and from such a habit it is not a great distance to complete lack of judgment and superstition. — Any sort of superstition is fatal to the student of the spiritual. **The possibility of penetrating in a true way into the regions of spiritual life [come] only by guarding himself carefully against superstition, fantastic ideas, and daydreaming.** No one can enter the spirit world in the right way [while happy merely to experience] something that “cannot be grasped by the human mind.” A preference for the “inexplicable” certainly makes no one a student of the spirit. He must completely abandon the notion that “a mystic is someone who presumes wherever it suits him something inexplicable and unfathomable in the world.” **The student shows the proper feeling by acknowledging this existence of hidden forces and beings everywhere, but also by assuming that the uninvestigated may be investigated if the necessary powers are present.**

There is a certain attitude of soul that is important for the student of the spirit at every stage of his development. [Rather than] directing his desire for knowledge in a one-sided way, asking, “How may this or that question be answered?”; instead asking, “How do I develop this or that ability in myself?” By inner patient work in himself this or that faculty is developed, [and then] the answer to certain questions is received. **Students of the spirit will always foster this attitude of soul.**

Through this **they are led to work on themselves, to make themselves more and more mature, and to renounce the desire to force answers to certain questions. They will wait until such answers come to them.** — If, however, they become one-sided here also, they will not advance properly. The student may also have the feeling at a certain point of his development that he, with the degree of his ability, can himself answer the most sublime questions. Here also equanimity and equilibrium play an important role in the attitude of soul.

Many more soul faculties could be described, the fostering and development of which are beneficial when the student strives by means of exercises to attain inspiration. In all of them, we should have to emphasize that **equanimity and equilibrium are the soul faculties upon which everything depends.** They prepare the understanding and the ability to carry out the exercises outlined **for the purpose of acquiring inspiration.**

The exercises **for the attainment of intuition** demand that the student cause to disappear from his consciousness --not only the images to which he has surrendered himself in acquiring *imagination*-- but also the ... soul activity into which he has immersed himself for [acquiring] *inspiration*. **He should then literally retain nothing in his soul of previously known outer or inner experiences.** Were there to be, however, nothing left in his consciousness after this discarding of outer and inner experiences --that is to say, **were his consciousness then entirely to disappear and he to sink down into unconsciousness--** this would then make it clear to him that he had not yet made himself mature enough to undertake

exercises for intuition. He would then have to continue the exercises for imagination and inspiration. **A time will surely come when the consciousness is not empty after the soul has discarded all inner and outer experiences. But then, after this discarding, something remains in consciousness as an effect, to which we then may surrender in meditation just as we had previously surrendered to what owes its existence to outer or inner impressions. This something is of a quite special character. It is, in contrast to all preceding experiences, something entirely new.** When one experiences it one knows, “This I have not known before. It is **a perception just as the real tone, heard by the ear, is a perception,** but this something can only enter my consciousness through intuition, just as the tone can only enter my consciousness through the ear.” **Through intuition man's impressions are stripped of the last trace of the sensory-physical; the spiritual world now begins to open itself to cognition in a form that no longer has anything in common with the qualities of the physical world of the senses.**

Imaginative consciousness is attained through the development of the lotus flowers in the astral body. **Through the exercises that are undertaken for acquiring inspiration and intuition, certain definite motions, forms, and currents appear in the human ether or life body that were not present previously** [see Introduction to Anthroposophy for definitions]. They are in fact the **organs through which man adds to the scope of his faculties the “reading of the occult script,” and what lies beyond it.** The changes in the ether body of a human being who has attained inspiration and intuition present themselves to supersensible cognition in the following manner.

Somewhere in the [region] of the physical heart **a new center becomes conscious in the ether body, which develops into an etheric organ.** From this organ, movements and currents flow to the various members of the human body in the most manifold way. The most important of these currents flow to the lotus flowers, permeating them and their various petals, then proceeding outward, pouring themselves like radiations into external space. The more the human being is developed, the greater the sphere around him within which these radiations are perceptible. The center in the region of the heart does not, however, develop immediately at the start of correct training. It is first prepared. There appears, **to begin with, a temporary center in the head; this then moves down into the neighborhood of the larynx and finally settles in the region of the physical heart.** Were its development irregular, then the organ of which we have been speaking might immediately be formed in the neighborhood of the heart. In that case there would be danger that the student, instead of attaining quiet and factual supersensible perception, would become a visionary and fantastic. As he develops further, the student acquires the ability to free the currents and structures of his ether body from his physical body and to use them independently. In doing this, the lotus flowers serve him as organs through which he brings the ether body into motion. Before this occurs, however, **special currents and radiations must have formed in the sphere of the ether body, enclosing it like a fine network and**

making it into a self-contained being. If that has happened, the movements and currents taking place in the ether body are able to come into unhindered contact with the outer world of soul and spirit and to unite with it. [This is] so that outer occurrences in the realm of soul and spirit and inner events in the human ether body flow into one another. If that happens, **the moment has arrived when man perceives the world of inspiration consciously. This cognition occurs in a different way from cognition in the sensory-physical world.** In the latter we gain perceptions through the senses and form from them mental images and concepts. This is not the case with the **knowledge derived from inspiration.** What one knows **is immediately present in the act; there is no reflection after perception.** What sensory-physical cognition gains only afterwards in concepts is, in inspiration, given simultaneously with perception. **Man would therefore merge with the environment of soul and spirit and would not be able to distinguish himself from it had he not developed the above characterized network in the ether body.**

If the exercises leading to intuition are carried out, their effect extends not only to the ether body, but right down into the supersensible forces of the physical body. One should not, however, think that in this way effects take place in the physical body that are accessible to everyday sensory observation. These are effects that only supersensory cognition can judge. They have nothing whatever to do with external cognition. They are the results of the maturity of consciousness, when the latter is able to have experiences in intuition, in spite of the fact that it has excluded all previously known outer and inner experiences. — The experiences of intuition are delicate, intimate, and subtle, and **the human physical body is**, at the present stage of its evolution, coarse in comparison. It offers therefore **a strong hindrance to the success of intuition exercises.** If these are continued with energy and persistence and with the requisite inner tranquillity, the powerful hindrances of the physical body are finally overcome. The student notices this by the fact that **gradually certain expressions of the physical body that formerly took place unconsciously now come under his control.** He notices it also by the fact that for a short time he **feels the need, for example, so to control the breath that it comes into a sort of concord or harmony with what the soul performs** in the exercises or otherwise in inner meditation. The ideal of the development is that no exercises be made at all by means of the physical body itself, also no breathing exercises, but that everything that occurs in the physical body in this way should only come about as a consequence of pure intuition exercises.

This may actually be the source of the common sense of suffocation during ASP. If awareness of paralysis is itself evidence of irregular development spiritually, as I am proposing, then residual consciousness of physical rhythms may be felt as constricting in as much as they remain incongruent with newly awakened extra-physical functions. When I do manage to pull free of the physical form, as during astral projection or lucid dream, simply breathing becomes a relief and a

delight. Maybe that is when I have achieved, via etheric separation, control of my physical breathing from the other side, so to speak. One might even arrange to signal a watching bed partner using longer or shorter patterns of breathing. Of course, the first evidence of deep sleep is a slowed and regulated rhythm of respiration.

If the student of the spirit ascends upon the path into the higher worlds of knowledge, he notices at a certain stage that the cohesion of the forces of his personality assumes a different form. **[In] the physical-sensory world, the ego effects a uniform co-operation of the soul forces, of thinking, feeling, and willing.** These three soul forces stand always in a certain relationship to each other in the conditions of ordinary human life. One sees, for example, a certain object in the outer world. It pleases or displeases the soul. That is to say, by necessity, visualizing a thing will be followed by a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. One may, perhaps, desire the object or have the impulse to alter it in one way or another. [Therefore], the power of desire and will associate with visualizing and feeling. That this co-ordination takes place is caused by the ego uniting visualizing (thinking), feeling, and willing and in this way bringing order into the forces of the personality. **This healthy order would be interrupted if the ego were to prove powerless** in this regard; if, for example, desire should elect to go a different way from feeling or thinking. A human being would not be in a healthy soul condition who might think that this or that is right, but who might want something of which he is convinced that it is not right. The case would be similar if someone did not want what pleases him, but rather what displeases him. The human being now notices that on the path to higher knowledge thinking, feeling, and willing do indeed separate and each assumes a kind of independence. For example, a certain thought has no longer an inward urge toward a certain feeling and willing. The matter is as follows. In thinking something may be perceived correctly, but in order to have any feeling or to come to a resolution of the will, we need again an independent impulse from ourselves. **During supersensible perception thinking, feeling, and willing do not remain three forces that radiate from the common ego-center of the personality, but they become three independent entities, three personalities, as it were.** One must now make one's own ego all the stronger, for it is not merely a matter of its bringing three forces into order, but of leading and directing three entities. This separation, however, must only exist during supersensible perception. Here again it becomes clear how important it is that the **exercises for higher training** be accompanied by those that **give certainty and firmness to the power of judgment**, and to the life of feeling and willing. **For the person who does not bring these qualities with him into the higher world will soon see how the ego proves weak and unable to act as an orderly guide for thinking, feeling, and willing.** If this weakness were present, the soul would be as though torn by three personalities in as many directions and its inner unity would cease. If, however, the development of the student proceeds in the right way the described transformation of forces signifies true progress; the ego remains master of the independent entities that now form its soul. — In the further course of this

evolution the development continues. **Thinking that has become independent stimulates the emergence of a special fourth soul-spirit being** that may be described as a direct influx of currents into man, similar to thoughts. The entire cosmos then appears as a thought-structure confronting man as does the plant or animal world in the realm of the physical senses. **Likewise, feeling and willing** that have become independent stimulate two forces in the soul that act in it like independent beings. Still **another seventh power and being appears that is similar to one's own ego itself.**

This entire experience is connected with yet another. Before his entrance into the supersensible world, man knew thinking, feeling, and willing only as inner soul experiences. As soon as he enters the supersensible world he perceives objects that do not express the physical-sensory, but the psycho-spiritual. Behind the characteristics of the new world now perceived by him stand **soul-spirit beings**. These **now stand before him as an outer world, just as in the physical realm stones, plants, and animals stood before his senses.** The student of the spiritual can now perceive an important difference between the world of soul and spirit that reveals itself to him, and the world that he was accustomed to perceiving through his physical senses. **A plant in the world of the senses remains just as it is, whatever the human soul may feel or think about it. With the images of the world of soul and spirit this is, at the outset, not the case. [These images] alter according to what the human being feels or thinks. In this way he gives them form that depends upon his own nature.** Let us imagine that a certain picture appears before man in the world of imagination. If, at first, he remains indifferent to it in his soul, it then shows itself in a certain form. At the moment, however, when pleasure or displeasure is felt in regard to the picture, it changes its form. The pictures therefore, in the first instance, express not only what they are, independent of man, but they reflect what man is himself. They are permeated through and through by his own nature which spreads like a veil over the supersensible beings. **Although real beings confront him, he does not see them, but instead, his own creation [as imaginative representations]. Thus he may have something true before him and, nevertheless, see something false.** Indeed, this is not only the case in regard to what man notices in himself as his own essential nature, but everything that is in him affects this world. He may have, for example, hidden inclinations that do not come into evidence in life because of his education and character. [These inclinations] affect the world of the soul and spirit, which takes on a peculiar coloring through the whole being of man, no matter whether he himself knows much about this being or not. —In order to be able **to advance further from this stage of development it is necessary that man learn to distinguish between himself and the outer spiritual world.** It is necessary that he learn **to eliminate all the effects of himself upon his soul-spirit environment.** This cannot be done otherwise than by acquiring a knowledge of what he himself carries into the new world. It is **therefore important that he first possess true, thoroughly developed self-knowledge,** in order to be able to have a clear perception of the surrounding world of soul and spirit. Now, certain facts of human development demand that such self-knowledge must take place quite naturally at

the time of the entrance into the higher world. Man develops his ego, his self-consciousness in the everyday physical-sensory world. This ego now acts as a center of attraction for everything belonging to man. **All his inclinations, sympathies, antipathies, passions, and opinions group themselves, as it were, around his ego**, and this ego is also the point of attraction for what may be designated as the karma of man. If this ego were to be seen unconcealed it would show that certain forms of destiny must still be encountered by it in this and in subsequent incarnations, according to the way it has lived in the preceding incarnations and has made this or that its own. Invested with all this, **the ego must appear as the first image** before the human soul when the latter ascends into the world of soul and spirit. **This Doppelganger (double or twin likeness) of man must, according to a law of the spiritual world, emerge prior to everything else as his first impression in that world.** One may easily make the law underlying this fact understandable if one considers the following. **In the life of the physical senses man only perceives himself in so far as he experiences himself inwardly** in his thinking, feeling, and willing. This, however, is an inner perception; it does not present itself to the human being like stones, plants, and animals. Also, man learns to know himself only partially through inner perception. **He has something in himself that prevents his having more profound self-knowledge. This [hidden something] is an impulse to transform immediately a trait of character if he, as a result of self-knowledge, must admit to it and does not wish to deceive himself about himself.**

The essential point is that our true spiritual state, the disaster we are making of our eternal selves, is hidden or veiled from our day-to-day consciousness –as a protection. It is a mercy that we are not forced, until properly prepared, to confront this reality. Else the knowledge would drive one to despair or madness. Until then, the truth acts unconsciously as destiny, shaping the course of our lifetime to provide the requisite character preparation over time. What follows develops this further; and the reader may recognize biblical themes of the original temptation and fall of humankind, as well as the resulting expulsion from our originally intended region of existence as enforced by the angel bearing a flaming sword. Sounds like the stuff of fantasy, but there is apparently no better portrayal in material terms of mankind's spiritual history.

If he does not follow this impulse, **if he simply turns his attention away from himself, remaining what he is, then he, naturally, also deprives himself of the possibility of self-knowledge** in the point in question. **If man, however, penetrates into himself and confronts himself without deception** with this or that trait, **then he will either be in the position to improve the trait, or he will be incapable of doing so under the present circumstances of his life.** In the latter case a feeling will creep over his soul that must be described as a feeling of shame.

This is indeed **the reaction of healthy human nature: it feels through self-knowledge various kinds of shame.** This feeling has even in ordinary life a quite definite effect. The normally thinking human being will take care that what fills him, through himself, with this feeling does not become evident outwardly in effects, does not manifest in outer deeds. **Shame is thus a force that impels man to conceal something in his inner being and not allow it to become outwardly perceptible.** If we give this due consideration, we shall find it comprehensible that spiritual research ascribes much farther reaching effects to an inner soul experience that is closely related to the feeling of shame. This research finds that there is, concealed in the depths of the soul, a sort of hidden shame of which the human being is not conscious in physical-sensory life. **This concealed feeling,** however, acts in a similar manner to the feeling of shame in everyday life; it **prevents the innermost nature of the human being from appearing before him in a perceptible picture.** **If this feeling were not present, the human being would perceive before him what he is in truth; his thoughts, feelings, and will would not only be experienced inwardly, but would be perceived outwardly just as stones, animals, and plants are perceived. This feeling is thus the concealer of man from himself, and at the same time it is [consequentially] the concealer of the entire world of soul and spirit.** [Since] his inner nature is concealed from him, he is also not able [unaided to] develop inner organs [delivering cognizance of] the world of soul and spirit; he is unable so to transform his nature that it may unfold spiritual organs of perception. — If, however, **through correct training** man strives to acquire these organs of perception, **what he himself IS appears to him as first impression. He perceives his Doppelganger, his double.** This self-perception is not at all to be separated from the perception of the rest of the world of soul and spirit. In everyday life of the physical-sensory world, the feeling characterized acts so as constantly to close the door of the world of soul and spirit to the human being. **Even the mere attempt to penetrate into this world causes the feeling of shame — which arises immediately, but of which we do not become conscious — to conceal the part of the world of soul and spirit that strives to appear. The exercises characterized open the door to this world. It is a fact, however, that this concealed feeling acts like a great benefactor of man.** For all that man acquires of power of judgment, feeling-life, and character without spiritual-scientific training does not enable him to bear without further preparation the perception of his own being in its true form. He would lose through this perception all self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-consciousness. That this may not happen, we must take the necessary precautions which we do undertake, alongside the exercises for higher knowledge, in the fostering of a healthy power of judgment, feeling-life, and character. Through this regular training man learns to know so much of spiritual science — as though without intention — and, moreover, **so many means for the attainment of self-knowledge and self-observation become clear to him as are necessary in order to encounter his Doppelganger bravely.** The student then only sees in another form, as a picture of the imaginative world, what he has already learned in the physical world. If he has first comprehended the law of karma properly in the physical world through his intellect, **he will not be especially shaken when he now sees the beginnings of his destiny**

engraved in the image of his Doppelganger. [Man must make] himself acquainted through his power of judgment with the evolution of the cosmos and mankind, how that, at a certain point of time of this evolution, the forces of Lucifer have penetrated into the human soul. Then he will bear it without difficulty when he becomes aware that the Luciferic beings with all their effects are contained within the image of his own nature. — **We see from this how necessary it is that man does not demand entrance into the spiritual world before he has understood,** through his ordinary power of judgment developed in the physical-sensory world, **certain truths about the spiritual world.** The knowledge is given in this book prior to the discussion about “Cognition of the Higher Worlds”. [This knowledge] should have been acquired by the student of spiritual science by means of his ordinary power of thought in the regular course of development, before he has the desire himself to enter into supersensible worlds.

In a training in which no attention is paid to the certainty and firmness of the power of judgment, of the life of feeling and character, **it may happen that the student encounters the higher world before he possesses the necessary inner faculties.** In that case the encounter with his Doppelganger would depress him and lead to error. If, however, the encounter were entirely avoided — something that might indeed be possible — and man nevertheless were led into the supersensible world, he would then be just as little in the position **to recognize that world in its true shape.** For it would be quite impossible for him **to distinguish between what he carries over as projections of himself into things and what they are in reality.** This distinction is **only possible if one perceives one's own being as an image in itself, and if,** as a result of this distinction, **everything that flows from one's own inner nature becomes detached from the environment.** — For man's life in the physical-sensory world, **the Doppelganger's effect is such that he becomes immediately invisible through the feeling of shame characterized when man approaches the world of soul and spirit. As a result of this, he conceals the entire latter world also. Like a “guardian” he stands there before that world, in order to deny entrance to those who are not truly capable of entering.** He may therefore be called the “guardian of the threshold that lies before the world of soul and spirit”. — Man also encounters the guardian when passing through physical death, and in the course of life between death and a new birth the guardian discloses himself by degrees in the evolution of soul and spirit. There, however, the encounter cannot depress the human being, because he then has knowledge of worlds quite different from those he knows in the life between birth and death. **If, without encountering the “guardian of the threshold,” man were to enter the world of soul and spirit, he might fall prey to deception after deception. For he would never be able to distinguish between what he himself has carried over into that world and what in reality belongs to it. A proper training must lead the student of spiritual science into the realm of truth only, not into the realm of illusion.** This training will of itself be of such a nature that the [guardian] encounter must of necessity take place sometime. For it is one of the precautionary measures, indispensable for the observation of supersensible worlds, against the possibility of falling prey to deception and the fantastic. — It belongs to the most

indispensable measures that **every student of spiritual science must take, to work carefully on himself in order not to become a fantast, a human being who might succumb to possible deception and self-delusion.** Where the advice for spiritual training is correctly followed, the sources that may bring deception are at the same time destroyed. Naturally, we cannot speak at length here of all the numerous details that have to be considered in regard to such precautionary measures. The important points can only be indicated. **Deceptions that have to be considered here are derived from two sources. They originate in part from the coloring of reality through one's own soul nature.** In ordinary life of the physical-sensory world there is comparatively little danger from this source of deception; for here **the outer world continually impresses its own form sharply upon our observation, no matter how the observer wants to color it** according to his own wishes and interests. As soon, however, **as man enters the imaginative world, its pictures are transformed through such wishes and interests, and he has before him, like a reality, what he himself has formed, or at least has helped in forming.** This source of deception is removed by the student's having learned to recognize, through his encounter with the “guardian of the threshold,” his own inner nature, which he might thus carry into the world of soul and spirit. The preparation that the student of spiritual science undergoes ... acts in such a way that he becomes accustomed to disregarding himself even when observing the physical-sensory world. [Instead, he permits] the objects and processes to speak to him purely out of their own nature. If the student has thus prepared himself sufficiently, he can calmly await the encounter with the “guardian of the threshold.” This encounter will be **the final test to determine whether he feels himself really in a position to disregard his own nature also when he confronts the world of soul and spirit.**

Besides this there is **still another source of delusion.** This comes into evidence **when one misinterprets an impression** made on one. A simple example ... in the physical sense-life is the delusion that arises when a man sits in a railway coach. While moving in a certain direction, he believes the trees and other objects of perception are moving in the opposite direction, while actually it is he himself who is moving with the train. It is easy to see that within the physical-sense world one finds the means of disposing of such delusions when, with sound judgment, one takes into consideration all that may possibly contribute to an adequate factual explanation. The matter is different, however, as soon as one penetrates into the realms of the supersensible. **In the world of the senses facts are not altered as a result of human delusion;** therefore it is possible, by means of unprejudiced observation, to rectify the delusion by means of the facts. **In the supersensible world this is not immediately possible. If one wants to observe a supersensible process and approaches it with false judgment,** one carries this judgment over into the process and it becomes so interwoven with the fact that it is impossible to distinguish the judgment from the fact. The error is then not within the human being and the correct fact outside him, but **the error itself is made a component of the outer fact. It cannot, therefore, be rectified simply by an unbiased observation of the fact. We are here pointing to what may be a superabundant source of**

delusion and the fantastic for those who approach the supersensible world without proper preparation. — The student of the spiritual, besides acquiring the ability to exclude the delusions that arise through the coloring of supersensible world-phenomena with his own nature, must also acquire the ability to make the second indicated source of delusion ineffective. He can exclude what comes from himself if he has first recognized the image of his own Doppelgänger. He will be able to exclude the second source of delusion if he acquires the ability to recognize, from the inner quality of a supersensible fact, whether it is reality or delusion. If the delusion were to appear exactly like the actual facts, then a distinction would not be possible. This, however, is not the case. **Delusions of the supersensible world have qualities in themselves by which they are to be distinguished from realities,** and it is important that the student of the spiritual know by which qualities he can recognize realities. Nothing is more self-evident than the fact that anyone ignorant of spiritual training may ask, “How is it at all possible to protect myself against delusion, when its sources are so numerous?” And he may continue to ask, “Is there any proof for the student of the spiritual against the fact that all his professed higher knowledge is not something based on mere delusion and autosuggestion?” Anyone who asks such questions does not realize that in true spiritual training, through the very manner of its occurrence, the sources of delusion are stopped up. In the first place, **in preparing himself the true spiritual science student will acquire sufficient knowledge about what may cause delusion and autosuggestion, and thus be in a position to protect himself from them.** He has, in this regard, more opportunity than any other human being to make himself prudent and capable in judgment on the path of life. Everything that he experiences causes him to disregard indefinite premonitions and suggestions. This training makes him as careful as possible. Besides this, **all correct training leads first to concepts about great cosmic events, and thus to things that make necessary the exertion of sound judgment,** which becomes, at the same time, more refined and acute. **Only someone who might refuse to go into such distant realms and preferred to abide with “revelations” of a world near at hand might lose the strengthening of that sound judgment that gives him certainty in distinguishing between delusion and reality.** All of this, however, is not yet the most important. That lies in the exercises themselves that are used in a correct spiritual training. These must be so arranged that the student is always consciously aware of what takes place in the soul during inner meditation. In order to bring about imagination, a symbol is first formed. In this symbol are still contained mental images of outer perceptions. The human being is not alone responsible for the content of these mental images; he does not make it himself. Thus he may delude himself in regard to its origin; he may interpret its origin incorrectly. But the student of spiritual science removes this content from his consciousness when he advances to the exercises of inspiration. Here he contemplates his own soul activity only, which has formed the symbol. Here also error is still possible. Through education, learning, and through other means man has acquired the character of his soul activity. He cannot know everything about its origin. **The student of spiritual science now removes even his own soul activity from his consciousness. If now anything remains in his consciousness, nothing is attached to it that cannot be**

surveyed. Nothing can intermingle with it that is not to be judged in regard to its whole content. In intuition, the student of spiritual science has thus a criterion enabling him to recognize how a clear reality of the world of soul and spirit is constituted. If he now applies the signs of soul and spirit-reality thus recognized to everything that comes under his observation, he is able to distinguish between illusion and reality. He may be certain that by employing this law he will remain protected from illusion in the supersensible world just as it cannot happen to him in the physical-sensory world to mistake an imaginary piece of hot iron for one that really burns. It is taken for granted that one only takes this attitude toward the knowledge one regards as one's own experiences in the supersensible worlds. [Not so in regard to experiences reported by] other persons, [nor regarding] what one comprehends with one's physical intellect and sound feeling for truth. The student of the spiritual will take pains to draw an exact line between what he has acquired in the one way and what he has acquired in the other. He will receive willingly, on the one hand, the communications about the higher worlds and seek to understand them by means of his capacity to judge. If on the other hand he states something as his own experience, his own observation, he will have tested whether this has confronted him with precisely the qualities he has learned to perceive by means of unerring intuition.

After the student of the spiritual has encountered the “guardian of the threshold,” further experiences await him as he ascends into supersensible worlds. First he will notice that an inner relationship exists between this “guardian of the threshold” and [the resulting *seventh* soul-power, as described above, having] shaped itself into an independent principle. Indeed, this seventh principle is [in a way] nothing else but the Doppelganger, the “guardian of the threshold” himself, and this principle sets the student of the spiritual a special task. He has to direct and lead with his newborn self what he is in his ordinary self and which appears to him in an image. A sort of *battle against the Doppelganger* will result. The latter will constantly strive for supremacy. To establish the right relationship to this Doppelganger and not permit him to do anything that is not under the influence of the newborn ego-- this strengthens and fortifies man's powers. — In the higher world, self-knowledge is different, in a certain respect, from self-knowledge in the physical-sensory world. Whereas in the physical-sensory world self-knowledge appears only as an inner experience, the newborn self presents itself at once as an outer soul phenomenon. Man beholds his newborn self as *another being standing before him* [an eighth entity, counterpart of the guardian], but he cannot perceive it completely. For whatever stage he may have reached upon the way into the supersensible worlds, there are always still higher stages. At these stages he will perceive ever more and more of his “higher self.” This “higher self” can thus only partially reveal itself to the student of the spiritual at any of these stages. When he [the human being] first becomes aware of some aspect of his “higher self,” [the temptation is extremely great] to observe this “higher self,” so to speak, from the standpoint he has gained in the physical-sensory world [as another separate individual]. This

temptation is even good and it must appear, if development is to proceed in the right way. **We must observe what appears in the Doppelganger, the “guardian of the threshold,” and place it before the “higher self” in order to note the contrast between what we are and what we are to become. Through this observation the [first] “guardian of the threshold” begins to take on quite a different form. He presents himself as an image of all the hindrances that the development of the higher self must encounter. The student will perceive what a load he must drag in the form of his ordinary self.** If he is not strong enough through his preparations to say, “I will not remain stationary here, but unceasingly strive to reach my higher self,” he will slacken his efforts and shrink back before what is in store for him. He has plunged into the world of soul and spirit, but now gives up his efforts. He becomes a prisoner of the form that, through the “guardian of the threshold,” now stands before the soul. **What is important here is that in this experience he does not have the feeling of being a prisoner.** On the contrary, he believes he experiences something quite different. **The form that the “guardian of the threshold” calls forth can be of such a nature that it [ironically] causes [the observer to feel that] the entire compass of all imaginable worlds [lies before him in the pictures that appear at this stage]. [It is an impression] of having attained the pinnacle of knowledge, with no need of striving further. Instead of feeling to be a prisoner he may feel himself as the immeasurably rich possessor of all the world mysteries.** That one can have such an experience depicting the very opposite of [material] facts-- this will not astonish a person who keeps in mind that this experience [has already placed him instead] in the world of soul and spirit. It is a peculiarity of this world that events may present themselves in reverse order. This fact was pointed out earlier in this book when life after death was discussed.

The [higher] figure perceived at this stage of development shows the student something in addition to what appeared to him in the first instance as the “guardian of the threshold.” **In this Doppelganger all the peculiarities were perceived that the ordinary self of man has in consequence of the influence of the forces of Lucifer. Now, however, in the course of human evolution another power has entered the human soul through the influence of Lucifer. This is the power that was designated in an earlier section of this book as the power of Ahriman. It is the power that prevents the human being during physical sense-existence from perceiving the soul-spirit beings of the outer world lying behind the veil of the sensory.** The form the human soul has assumed under the influence of this power is shown in a picture by the shape that emerges in the experience described. — **The person who is adequately prepared for this experience will be able to interpret it correctly; very soon thereafter another form will appear [as an image of the newborn higher self] that we may call the “greater guardian of the threshold” in contrast to the already described “lesser guardian.” This greater guardian tells the student of the spiritual that he must not remain stationary at this stage but must energetically work on. He calls forth in the observer the consciousness that the world [of soul and spirit] so conquered becomes truth -- is not transformed into illusion-- only if the work is continued in an adequate manner. — If, because of incorrect spiritual training, a person were to enter**

upon this experience unprepared, then, in the encounter with the “greater guardian of the threshold,” something would pour into his soul that only can be compared to the “feeling of immeasurable horror,” of “boundless fear.”

So, we think that ASP encounters with the Old Hag or Alien Abductor or Dark Man are frightening. Just wait ...

[Recall] the student’s encounter with the “lesser guardian of the threshold”, where he is afforded the possibility of testing whether or not he is protected against delusions that will arise from intermingling his own being with the supersensible world. So [also] can he test himself by the experiences that finally lead to the “greater guardian of the threshold” whether he is capable of mastering the delusions described above as coming from the second source. **[He tests his own ability] to withstand the gigantic illusion conjured up before him —that the picture world he has gained [appears to be] a rich possession, while in reality he is only a prisoner. If he is able to [overcome] this delusion, he is then, during the progressing course of his development, guarded from mistaking illusion for reality.**

The “guardian of the threshold” will assume, to a certain degree, an individual shape for each human being. The encounter with him corresponds indeed to the experience by which the personal character of the supersensible observations is overcome and through which the possibility is given of entering a region of experience that is free from personal coloring and applies to every human being.

If the student of the spiritual has had the above described experiences he is capable of distinguishing, within the surrounding world of soul and spirit, between himself and what lies outside him [spiritually]. He will then recognize that it is necessary to comprehend the cosmic process described in this book [see the previous Chapter IV: the Evolution of the Cosmos and Man], in order to understand man and his life. Indeed, we understand the physical body only when we recognize how it has been fashioned during the Saturn, Sun, Moon, and Earth evolutions. We understand the ether body when we follow its formations through the Sun, Moon, and Earth evolutions. Moreover, we understand what at present is connected with the Earth evolution when we know how everything has unfolded itself step by step. **Through spiritual training the student is placed in the position to recognize the relationship of everything that exists in the human being to corresponding facts and beings of the world outside him.** For it is a fact that every member of the human organism stands in a relationship to the whole world surrounding it. In this book it has only been possible to indicate the facts in a sketchy outline. We must, however, consider that the human physical body, for example, was present during the Saturn evolution only in its rudimentary beginnings. Its organs — the heart, the lungs, the brain — developed later out of these beginnings during the Sun, Moon, and Earth evolutions. The heart, lungs, and the other organs are thus related to the Sun, Moon, and Earth evolutions. It is quite

the same with the members of the ether and soul body, the sentient soul, and the other principles. Man is fashioned from the entire surrounding world, and every part of him corresponds to a process or being of the outer world. At the corresponding stage of his development the student becomes acquainted with this relationship between his own being and the great world. We may designate this stage of cognition as the becoming aware of the correspondence between the lesser world, the microcosm, which is the human being himself, and the greater world, the macrocosm. If the student has struggled through to such a stage of knowledge, a new experience may occur for him. **He begins to feel as though he was inter-grown with the entire cosmic structure, in spite of the fact that he feels himself in his complete independence. This feeling is a merging with the entire cosmos, a becoming one with it, but without losing one's own essential being. This stage of development may be designated as the "becoming one with the macrocosm."** It is significant that this becoming one, this union, is **not to be thought of as though through it the individual consciousness were to cease and the human being were to flow out into the universe, merging with it.** Such a thought would be merely the expression of an opinion springing from the untrained power of judgment. — The stages of higher knowledge, in the sense of the process of initiation that has been described in this book, may now be enumerated as follows:

- I. Study of spiritual science, in which one employs one's power of judgment gained in the physical-sensory world.
- II. Acquiring imaginative knowledge.
- III. Reading the occult script corresponding to inspiration.
- IV. Living into the spiritual environment — corresponding to intuition.
- V. Knowledge of the relationships between microcosm and macrocosm.
- VI. Union with the macrocosm.
- VII. Total experience of all previous experiences as a fundamental mood of the soul.

These stages need not be thought of as successive experiences. On the contrary, the training may proceed in such a way that, in accordance with the individuality of the student of the spiritual, he may have reached only a certain degree of perfection in a preceding stage when he begins exercises that correspond to a subsequent stage. It may well happen, for example, that the student has only gained a few imaginations with certainty, yet he already performs exercises leading to inspiration, intuition, or the cognition of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm.

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If the student of the spiritual has experienced *intuition*, he not only knows the images of the psycho-spiritual world, not merely reading their connections in the "occult script". He further attains to knowledge of the spiritual beings themselves [through whom this world], to which the human being belongs, comes into existence. In this way he learns to know himself in [spiritual] form ... in the world of soul and spirit. He has struggled through to a perception of his higher ego, and he has become aware of how he has to continue his efforts in order to control his

Doppelganger, the “guardian of the threshold.” He has, however, also encountered the **“greater guardian of the threshold,”** who **stands before him as an ever-present exhorter to further effort.** This “greater guardian” becomes **the ideal toward which he strives.** If this feeling emerges in the student of the spiritual, he has then acquired the possibility of recognizing Who [virtually] it is that stands there before him as the “greater guardian of the threshold.” **To the perception of the student of the spiritual this guardian now transforms himself into the form of the Christ,** whose Being and participation in Earth evolution has been made clear in the previous chapters of this book. **The student is now initiated into the exalted mystery that is linked with the name of the Christ.** The Christ shows Himself to the student as the “great ideal of man on earth.” — If thus **through intuition the Christ is recognized in the spiritual world, as what occurred historically on earth** in the fourth post-Atlantean evolutionary epoch — the Greco-Latin epoch — also becomes comprehensible. The way in which, at that time, **the exalted Sun Being, the Christ, has intervened in the Earth evolution** and how he **continues to work within this evolution becomes the personally experienced knowledge of the student of the spiritual.** It is thus a revelation of the meaning and significance of Earth evolution that the student receives through intuition.

The way to knowledge of the supersensible worlds, which is described here, is one that every human being can follow, no matter what the situation in which he may find himself within the present-day conditions of life. When describing such a path **we must consider that the goal of knowledge and truth is the same in all ages of Earth evolution, but that the starting points of man have been different in different ages.** If the human being wishes to tread the path to the spiritual world he cannot at present begin at the same starting point as, for example, the would-be initiate of ancient Egypt. Therefore, the exercises that were imposed upon the student of ancient Egyptian [mysteries] cannot be carried out by the modern man without modification. Since that time, human souls have passed through various incarnations, and this advance from incarnation to incarnation is not without meaning and significance. The faculties and qualities of souls alter from incarnation to incarnation. Whoever considers human historical life, be it only superficially, is able to notice that **since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD all life-conditions have changed when compared with previous centuries;** that opinions, feelings, and also abilities of human beings have become different from what they were previously. **The path to higher knowledge described here is eminently fit for souls who incarnate in the immediate present. It is one that places the point of departure for spiritual development just where the human being now stands in any situation presented by modern life.** — Progressive evolution leads mankind in regard to the path to higher knowledge from period to period to ever changing forms, just as outer life changes its forms, and at all times a perfect harmony must prevail between outer life and initiation.

VI. The Present and Future of Cosmic and Human Evolution

What follows presumes a basic understanding of the material in Chapter IV. The Evolution of the Cosmos and Man. I probably will not attempt abridgement and annotations of that section of this book. The reader may wish to read through that chapter once. Otherwise, it is essential to recognize that Steiner is not referring to material bodies of our current solar system in his designation of Saturn, Sun, Moon and Earth evolutions. These refer rather to planetary cycles of humankind's spiritual development as understood for millennia by researchers of spiritual history. The days of our week retain a dim memory of this ancient knowledge --starting with Saturday, Sunday, and Monday-- describing the progress of human development leading up to those stages where enduring spiritual substance condensed to appear as hardened perishable material forms. The biblical Genesis account of earth's creation is a recounting of events launching the fourth Earth evolution (following the formless void separating planetary cycle) wherein mankind first embodied self-consciousness and the potential for choosing evil or good, a path pursuing self or self-denying love. Until very recently, physical science focused solely upon the material aspects of man's history and development, excluding and even denying the primary significance of our spiritual being. The advent of research into supra-material realities, such as quantum mechanics and the human genome project, marks the beginning of a new sixth cultural epoch within the fourth or post-Atlantean age of this Earth evolution (recorded biblically as following the Great Flood). Steiner does not discuss modern theories of physical evolution, Darwinian or otherwise, except to note that even natural scientists -- who may never acknowledge such a thing as spiritual science-- recognize that earth life forms appear to have advanced from simple to complex as if unfolding a master plan born of extra-human wisdom and purpose. All but the most dogmatic materialists have abandoned naturalistic principles of blind chance, boundless time and adaptation as sufficient alone to originate the complexity of life and human potential we see today.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to know anything of the present and future of human and cosmic evolution in the sense of spiritual science without a knowledge of this evolution in the past. For **what presents itself to the perception of the spiritual researcher when he observes the hidden facts of the past contains simultaneously all he can know of the present and future.** This book has dealt with the evolution of Saturn, Sun, Moon, and Earth. It is impossible to understand

the Earth evolution, in the sense of spiritual science, if one does not observe the facts of the preceding evolutionary cycles. For **the facts of the Moon, Sun, and Saturn evolutions are contained in a certain sense within the conditions that confront the human being at present within the sphere of the earth.** The beings and things that participated in the Moon evolution have evolved further. Everything that belongs to the present earth came out of them. For physical-sensory consciousness, however, not everything is perceptible that, having come from the Moon, has become the Earth. A part of what has evolved over from the Moon becomes evident only at a certain stage of supersensible consciousness. **When this knowledge is attained, then we perceive that our earth is bound to a supersensible world,** containing the part of the Moon existence that has not condensed to the condition of physical sense-perception. This supersensible world contains the uncondensed part of the Moon as it is at present, not as it was at the time of the ancient Moon evolution. Supersensible consciousness, however, is able to obtain a picture of the previous condition. If this supersensible consciousness concentrates upon the perception it can have at the present time, it becomes evident that, quite by itself, it gradually resolves itself into **two pictures.** One of these presents **the shape the Earth had [before]** during its Moon evolution. The manner in which **the other picture** shows itself, however, reveals that it contains **a form that is still in its germinal stage** and that will only become real in the future in the sense that the earth is now real. **Further observation shows that, in a certain sense, the effect of what happens upon the earth streams continually into this future form. In this form we have, therefore, before us what is to be our earth in the future.** The effects of earth existence will unite with what happens in the characterized world and out of this will arise the new cosmic being into which the Earth will be transformed, just as the Moon has transformed itself into the Earth. **We may call this future form the *Jupiter* evolution.** If we observe this Jupiter stage with supersensible perception, we can see that in the future certain processes must take place. [This is] because certain beings and things are present --in the supersensible part of the Earth that originated on the Moon-- that will assume certain forms when this or that will have taken place [that is] within the earth of the physical senses. In the Jupiter evolution something will, therefore, exist that has already been determined by the Moon evolution, and it will contain new factors that enter into the entire evolution only through terrestrial processes. Because of this, supersensible consciousness may learn something of what will happen during the Jupiter state. **The beings and facts perceived within this field of consciousness do not possess the nature of sense images; they do not even appear as delicate, airy structures from which effects might proceed which remind us of sense-impressions. They give us pure spiritual impressions of tone, light, and warmth. The latter do not express themselves through any sort of material embodiment. They can be comprehended only through supersensible consciousness. We may, nevertheless, say that these beings possess a "body." Yet this body shows itself within their soul nature, which reveals itself as their present being, like a sum of *condensed memories* which they bear within their soul.** We are able to distinguish in their being between what they now experience, and what they have experienced and remember. The latter is contained within them

like a bodily nature. They experience it just as the earth man experiences his body. At a stage of supersensible perception, one higher than the one just described as necessary for the cognition of Moon and Jupiter, supersensible beings and things become visible that are the further developed forms of what was already present during the Sun evolution. But these have attained at present such a high stage of evolution that it does not at all exist for a consciousness that has only attained to the perception of Moon forms. The picture of this world also resolves itself into two pictures during inner meditation. One of these leads to the cognition of the past Sun evolution, the other presents a future form of the Earth. That is to say, the form into which the Earth will have transformed itself when the effects of the Earth and Jupiter processes have streamed into the forms of that world. **What we thus observe of this future world may be designated, in the sense of spiritual science, as the Venus evolution.** In a similar manner there is, for a still more highly developed supersensible consciousness, **a future stage of evolution that may be designated Vulcan evolution.** It has a relationship to the Saturn evolution similar to the one the Venus evolution has to the Sun evolution, and the Jupiter evolution has to the Moon evolution. We may, therefore, if we consider the past, present and future of Earth evolution, speak of Saturn, Sun, Moon, Earth, Jupiter, Venus, and Vulcan evolutions. — Just as these all-encompassing relationships of the Earth evolution result for our consciousness, so also there result observations of a nearer future. **Every picture of the past corresponds also to one of the future.** Yet in speaking of such things something must be emphasized which, of necessity, must be given due consideration. If we wish to recognize such matters we must discard completely the opinion that philosophical reflection, trained merely by external reality, is able to discover anything about them. These things cannot and never should be investigated by such a mode of thinking. If a person were to believe, when he has received communications through spiritual science about the Moon evolution, that through such reflection he might discover how things will appear on Jupiter by combining the relationships of Earth and Moon, he will fall prey to enormous deceptions. Research into these relationships is only to be made when supersensible consciousness has lifted itself to higher observation. Only when what has thus been discovered is communicated can it be understood without supersensible consciousness.

Concerning the communications about the future, the researcher of the spiritual is in a position different from the position concerning those about the past. The human being cannot, at the outset, confront future events as impartially as he can confront the past. What will occur in the future stirs human feelings and will; the past is endured in quite a different manner. Whoever observes life knows how true this already is for ordinary existence. To what an enormous degree this increases, what forms it assumes in regard to the hidden facts of life only he can know who is cognizant of certain things of the supersensible worlds. This is the reason why the **knowledge of these things is fixed within quite definite limits.**

Just as the great cosmic evolution can be presented in the succession of its states from the Saturn to the Vulcan evolution, **it is also possible to present smaller**

time-divisions; those of the Earth evolution, for example. Since that enormous catastrophe that brought the ancient Atlantean civilization to an end there have been successive stages within human evolution that in this book have been designated as the ancient Indian, the ancient Persian, the Egypto-Chaldean, and the Greco-Latin **epochs of culture. The fifth period is the one in which mankind now stands, the present.** This period gradually began during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries A.D., after it had prepared itself since the fourth and fifth centuries. From the fifteenth century onward it emerged quite clearly. The preceding Greco-Latin culture began about the eighth century B.C. At the end of its first third, the Christ event occurred. **The condition of the human soul and all the human faculties changed with the transition from the Egypto-Chaldean to the Greco-Latin cultural period. In the former there was not yet present what we now know as logical cogitation, as intellectual comprehension of the world.** What the human being now acquires as knowledge through his intellect he received in the form that was fitting for that time: directly through an inner, in a certain respect, supersensible knowledge. He perceived objects, and while perceiving them their concept, their image, needed by the soul, arose in its inner being. With the power of cognition described, **not only images of the physical sense world emerge, but from the depths of the soul there arises a certain knowledge of non-sensory facts and beings.** This was the remnant of ancient *dim clairvoyant consciousness*, once the common possession of all mankind. **During the Greco-Latin period there arose more and more human beings who lacked such faculties. Instead of these faculties, intellectual reflection upon objects began to appear. Human beings were by degrees removed from a direct, dreamlike perception of the world of soul and spirit and were ever more dependent upon a picture of that world, formed by their intellect and feeling.** This state continued in a certain respect throughout the entire fourth post-Atlantean period. **Only those individuals who had preserved the ancient soul condition like a heritage could still receive the spiritual world directly into their consciousness.** These individuals, however, are stragglers of a more ancient epoch. The kind of knowledge they possessed no longer fitted the new age. For it is a consequence of the laws of evolution that an ancient soul faculty loses its full significance when new faculties appear. Human life then adapts itself to these new faculties, and it is no longer able to exercise the old faculties. **There were, however, also individuals who in a quite conscious manner began to develop, besides the acquired powers of intellect and feeling, other higher faculties that again made it possible for them to penetrate into the world of soul and spirit. They had to begin to do this in a manner quite different from what was customary for the pupils of the ancient initiates.** The latter did not yet have to consider the soul faculties first developed in the fourth cultural period. In that period the method of spiritual training began that has been described in this book as the present-day method. But it was at that time only in its infancy; it could be properly developed only in the fifth cultural period, actually since the twelfth and thirteenth — chiefly the fifteenth — centuries of our era. Human beings who in this way sought to ascend into the supersensible world were able to experience through their own imagination, inspiration, and intuition something of higher realms of existence. Those who

remained satisfied with the developed faculties of intellect and feeling could learn only from tradition, what ancient clairvoyance knew, and which was transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, or in writing.

Something of the real nature of the Christ event could also be known only from tradition by those born after the event, if they had not attained a perception of the supersensible worlds. There were, however, certain initiates who still possessed the natural clairvoyant perception of the supersensible world and who through their development could elevate themselves to a higher world in spite of the fact that they paid no attention to the new powers of intellect and soul. Through such initiates a transition was created from the old method of initiation to the new. Such personalities existed also in subsequent periods. **It was the chief characteristic of the fourth cultural epoch that the soul's exclusion from direct intercourse with the world of soul and spirit strengthened the human being in his powers of intellect and feeling.** The souls who were incarnated at that time with highly developed powers of intellect and feeling carried over the result of this development into their incarnations in the fifth cultural period. As a compensation for this exclusion from intercourse with the world of soul and spirit the **mighty traditions of primeval wisdom were then available to man — and especially those concerning the Christ event.** These traditions, by the very power of their content, gave the souls a confident knowledge of the higher worlds. — **But human beings always existed who developed the higher powers of knowledge in addition to the faculties of intellect and feeling. It was their task to experience the facts of the higher world and chiefly the mystery of the Christ event through direct supersensible cognition. From them there flowed into the souls of other men as much as was comprehensible and good for them.** — **In harmony with the meaning of Earth evolution, the first spreading of Christianity had of necessity to occur just at a time when the powers of supersensible cognition had not been developed in a large portion of mankind. It was because of this that the force of tradition was so powerful at that time.** The strongest possible force was needed to lead men, who were themselves unable to behold this world, to a trust in the supersensible world. There were almost always — if we disregard a brief period of exception in the thirteenth century — individuals who were able to elevate themselves to higher worlds through imagination, inspiration, and intuition. These men are the post-Christian successors of the ancient initiates, of the leaders and members of the institutions of mystery wisdom. They had the task of recognizing, by means of their own faculties, what had been comprehensible through ancient mystery wisdom, to which they had to add the knowledge of the essential nature of the Christ event.

A knowledge thus arose among these new initiates that included everything that was the subject of ancient initiation, but in the center of this knowledge there radiated the higher wisdom of the mysteries of the Christ event. Only in a small degree could such knowledge flow into general life, while the human souls of the fourth period of culture had to consolidate the faculties of intellect and feeling. **Thus it was at that time a very “hidden knowledge.” Then the dawn of the new**

age broke, which is to be designated as the fifth cultural period. Its nature consists in the *advance of the evolution of the intellectual faculties*, which have unfolded to an exuberant blossoming and will unfold still further in the present and into the future. This prepared itself slowly, beginning with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in order to accelerate its advance from the sixteenth century onward into the present time. Under these influences, **the chief objective of the evolution of the fifth cultural epoch was the fostering of the powers of the intellect, whereas the confident knowledge of former ages, traditional knowledge, lost more and more of its power over the human soul. But in its place there developed what may be called an increasingly stronger influx into human souls of the knowledge gained through *modern supersensible consciousness*.** The “hidden knowledge” flows, although quite unnoticed at the beginning, into the mode of thinking of the men of this period. It is only self-evident that, up to the present, intellectual forces reject this knowledge. But what must happen will happen, in spite of all temporary rejection. **The “hidden knowledge,” which from this side takes hold of mankind now and will take hold of it more and more in the future, may be called symbolically “the wisdom of the Grail.”** If this symbol, as it is given in legend and myth, is understood in its deeper meaning, we shall find that it is a significant image of the nature of what has been spoken of above as the knowledge of the new initiation, with the Christ mystery at its center. The modern initiates may, therefore, also be called “initiates of the Grail.” The way into the supersensible worlds, the first stages of which have been described in this book, leads to the “science of the Grail.” This knowledge has the peculiarity that research into its facts can be made only if one has acquired the necessary means that have been described in this book. If, however, such research has been made, these facts can then be understood through the soul forces developed in the fifth cultural period. **Indeed, it will become more and more evident that these forces, in an ever higher degree, will find satisfaction through this knowledge. We move now in an age in which *this knowledge ought to be received more abundantly into general consciousness than was previously the case*, and it is from this point of view that this book desires to impart its information.** To the degree to which the development of mankind will absorb the knowledge of the Grail, **the impulse given through the Christ event can become ever more significant.** To the external aspect of Christian development the inner aspect will be joined more and more. What may be known through imagination, inspiration, and intuition about the higher worlds in connection with the Christ mystery will increasingly permeate the thought, feeling, and will-life of humanity. **The “concealed knowledge of the Grail” will be revealed; as an inner force it will permeate more and more the manifestations of human life.**

Throughout the fifth cultural period the knowledge of supersensible worlds will flow into human consciousness, and when the sixth period begins, mankind will have been able to re-attain at a higher stage what it has possessed of non-sensory perception at an earlier period in a still dim way. The new possession will, however, have a form quite different from the old. What the

soul knew in ancient times of higher worlds was not permeated by its own power of intellect and feeling; that knowledge came as an inspiration. **In the future the soul will not merely have inspirations, but it will comprehend them and feel them as being of its own being. If knowledge about this or that being or thing dawns upon the soul, the intellect will then find it justified through its own nature.**

[Whereas] if a knowledge of a different kind asserts itself — knowledge of a moral law, or a human relationship — the soul will then say to itself: My feeling can only justify itself when I act in accordance with this knowledge. Such a soul state is to be developed by a sufficiently large number of human beings of the sixth cultural period. — What the third, the Egypto-Chaldean cultural period, has bestowed upon human evolution repeats itself, in a certain way, in the fifth period. In the third period the soul still perceived certain facts of the supersensible world, but the perception of this world was disappearing. The intellectual powers were preparing themselves for their evolution, and they were, for the time being, to exclude the human being from the higher world. **In the fifth cultural period the supersensible facts, which in the third period were perceived by a hazy clairvoyance, again become manifest. Now they are permeated with the forces of human intellect and personal feeling. They become permeated also with what can be imparted to the soul through the knowledge of the Christ mystery.** Hence they assume quite a different form from the one possessed previously. [In ancient times] the impressions received from the supersensible worlds were felt as forces giving impulses to the human being from an external spiritual world in which he did not dwell. [Now] these impressions will be felt, through the development of the modern age, as proceeding from a world into which the human being grows and in which he participates progressively more and more. No one should believe that the Egypto-Chaldean culture will repeat itself in such a way that the soul will simply receive what existed at that time and has been handed down by tradition. ***The Christ impulse, rightly understood, works in such a way that the human soul who has received it feels, recognizes, and conducts itself as a member of a spiritual world, outside of which it had previously dwelt.*** — In this way the third epoch reappears in the fifth, in order to permeate human souls with what the fourth epoch has brought as something completely new. Something similar will be the case with the sixth epoch in regard to the second and the seventh in regard to the first, the ancient Indian epoch. All the marvels of wisdom of ancient India that the great teachers of that time could proclaim will be able to reappear as truth of life of human souls in the seventh cultural epoch.

The transformations in the things of the earth existing outside the human being occur with a certain relationship to humanity's own evolution. **After the seventh cultural period has run its course, the earth will be visited by a catastrophe** that may be likened to what occurred between the Atlantean and post-Atlantean ages, and the transformed earth conditions after this catastrophe will again evolve in seven time periods. Human souls who will then be incarnated will experience, at a higher stage, the union with the higher world experienced by the Atlanteans at a lower stage. **Only those human beings, however, in whom are incarnated souls that have developed in a manner possible through the influences of the Greco-**

Latin epoch and the subsequent fifth, sixth, and seventh cultural epochs of the post-Atlantean evolution will be able to cope with the newly formed earth conditions. The inner being of such souls will correspond to what the earth has then become. **Other souls will then have to remain behind, whereas previously they would have had the choice of creating the conditions for advancement.** created the possibility for themselves, in the transition from the fifth to the sixth post-Atlantean period, of penetrating supersensible knowledge with the forces of intellect and feeling, will have the maturity for the corresponding conditions following the next great catastrophe. **The fifth and sixth periods are, so to speak, decisive.** In the seventh, the souls who will have reached the goal of the sixth will develop correspondingly further; the other souls, however, will, under the changed conditions of the environment, find but little opportunity of retrieving what they have neglected. Only at some future time will conditions appear again that will permit this. — Evolution thus advances from age to age. Supersensible cognition not only observes such future changes in which the earth alone takes part, but it is also aware of changes that occur in co-operation with the heavenly bodies in its environment. A time will come when the evolution of the earth and mankind will have advanced so far that the spiritual powers and beings that had to sever themselves from the earth during the Lemurian age, will be able to unite themselves again with the earth. [See Chapter IV, where certain beings are described as separated in order to make possible the continued progress of the earth's beings]. The moon will then reunite with the earth. This will occur because at that time a sufficiently large number of human souls will possess so much inner strength that they will use these moon forces for the benefit of further evolution. This will occur at a time when, alongside the high level of development that will have been reached by a certain number of human souls, another development will occur that has taken the direction toward evil. **The laggard souls will have accumulated in their karma so much error, ugliness, and evil that they will form, for the time being, a special union of evil and aberrant human beings who violently oppose the community of good men.**

The good humanity will through its development acquire the use of the moon forces and thereby so transform the evil part also that, as a special realm of the earth, it may participate in further evolution. Through this work of the good humanity, the earth, united with the moon, will be able, after a certain period of evolution, to reunite also with the sun and with the other planets. Then, after an intermediate stage, which presents itself as a sojourn in a higher world, the Earth will transform itself into Jupiter. Within this state, what is now called the mineral kingdom will no longer exist; the forces of this mineral kingdom will be transformed into plant forces. The plant kingdom, which in contrast to the present plant kingdom will have an entirely new form, appears during the Jupiter state as the lowest kingdom. To this a higher kingdom is added, the transformed animal kingdom. Above that there is a human kingdom, which proves to be the progeny of the evil community that arose on the earth. And above all these are to be found the descendants of the good community of earth men, a human kingdom of a higher order. **A great part of the activity of this [higher] human kingdom consists in the work of ennobling the**

fallen souls of the evil community, so that they may still be able to find their way back into the actual human kingdom. The Venus evolution will be one in which the plant kingdom also will have disappeared; the lowest kingdom at that time will be the retransformed animal kingdom; this will be joined on an ascending scale by three human kingdoms of different degrees of perfection. During the Venus state the earth remains united with the sun; during the Jupiter state, however, evolution proceeds in such a way that at a certain point of time the sun departs once more from Jupiter and the latter receives its effects from the outside. After a time, the union of sun and Jupiter [Jupiter minus the sun in contradistinction to Jupiter with the sun. (Tr.)] again occurs and the transformation gradually proceeds over into the Venus state. During that state, a special cosmic body splits off that contains all the beings who have resisted evolution, a so to speak “irredeemable moon” which now moves toward [a different] evolution. (No expression can be found [to describe the character of this existence], because it is too dissimilar to anything that man can experience on earth.) The evolved mankind, however, advances in a completely spiritualized existence to the Vulcan evolution, the description of which does not lie within the scope of this book.

We see that the highest imaginable ideal of human evolution results from the “knowledge of the Grail”: the spiritualization that man acquires through his own efforts. For this spiritualization appears finally as a result of the harmony that he produces in the fifth and sixth cultural periods of present evolution between the acquired powers of intellect and feeling and the knowledge of the supersensible worlds. What he there produces in the inmost depths of his soul is finally itself to become the outer world. The human spirit elevates itself to the tremendous impressions of its outer world and first divines and afterwards recognizes spiritual beings behind these impressions; man's heart feels the boundless sublimity of the spiritual. The human being can also recognize that his inner experiences of intellect, feeling, and character are the indications of a nascent world of the spirit.

Whoever believes that human freedom is not compatible with foreknowledge and predestination of the future condition of things, should consider this: Free human action in the future depends just as little upon the character the predestined things will have as this freedom depends upon his resolve to live in a house a year hence, the plan of which he determines today. He will be as free as it is possible for him to be according to his inner nature, precisely in the house he has built for himself; and he will be as free upon Jupiter and Venus as his inner life permits just within the conditions that will arise there. **Freedom will not depend upon what has been predestined by antecedent conditions, but upon what the soul has made of itself.**

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Within the Earth evolution is contained what has evolved during the preceding Saturn, Sun, and Moon evolutions. The earth man finds “wisdom” in the processes

that take place in his environment. This wisdom is present as the result of what had happened previously. The Earth is the descendant of the ancient Moon which, with all that belonged to it, formed itself into the “cosmos of wisdom.” The Earth is the beginning of an evolution through which a new force is added to this wisdom. It brings the human being to the point where he feels himself an independent member of the spirit world. This rests on the fact that his ego is fashioned by the Spirits of Form during the Earth evolution, just as upon Saturn the Spirits of Will formed his physical body, upon the Sun the Spirits of Wisdom his life-body, and upon the Moon the Spirits of Motion his astral body. The manifestation of wisdom appears through the co-operation of the Spirits of Will, Wisdom, and Motion. The Earth beings and Earth processes can harmonize in wisdom with the other beings of their world through the work of these three classes of spirits. **From the Spirits of Form the human being receives his independent ego. In the future this ego will harmonize with the beings of Earth, Jupiter, Venus, and Vulcan through the power that is added to wisdom by the Earth evolution. This is the power of love.** This power of love must take its beginning in Earth humanity, and the “cosmos of wisdom” unfolds itself into a “cosmos of love.” Everything that the ego is able to unfold within itself is to become love. **The exalted Sun Being Whom we are able to characterize in the description of the Christ evolution manifests Himself as the all-encompassing “archetype of love.” Thus the seed of love is planted into the innermost core of human nature. And from there it is to flow into the whole of evolution.** Just as the previously formed wisdom reveals itself in the forces of the sensory external world of the earth, in the present-day “nature forces” [and animal instinct], so in the future love will reveal itself in all phenomena **as a new nature force.** [This] is **the mystery of all evolution** [past into the future]: All that the human being [knows and does in truth] is a sowing of seed that must ripen as love, and the greater the force of love coming into being, the greater will be the accomplishments of creative force in the future. In what will be created from love will lie the strong forces leading to the above described culminating result of spiritualization. **The greater the amount of spiritual cognition that flows into human and earth evolution, the greater will be the number of fertile seeds for the future. Spiritual knowledge is transmuted by its very nature into love.** The entire process that has been described, beginning with the Greco-Latin cultural epoch and extending through our present epoch, shows how this transformation is to take place, and also shows that the beginning of development into the future has been made. What has been prepared during the Saturn, Sun, and Moon evolutions as wisdom acts in the physical, ether, and astral body of man; there it shows itself as “cosmic wisdom”; in the “ego,” however, it becomes “inner wisdom.” From the Earth stage onward, “wisdom of the external world” becomes inner wisdom of man. Intensified in the inner life, it becomes the seed of love. **Wisdom is the pre-condition of love; love is the result of wisdom reborn in the ego.**

Whoever could be misled by the preceding expositions into believing that the described evolution bears a fatalistic stamp, would have misunderstood them. Whoever were to believe that in such an evolution a certain number of men would

be condemned to belong to the kingdom of “evil humanity,” fails to perceive how the mutual relationship between outer world and the world of soul and spirit takes shape in this evolution. Both outer world and the world of soul and spirit form, within certain limits, separate evolutionary streams. **Through the forces inherent in the sensory stream there arise the forms of the “evil human kingdom.” The necessity for a human soul to incarnate in such a form will only occur if this soul itself has [has freely chosen to create] the conditions for it.** The case might also arise that the forms originating from the forces of the sensory could not find human souls originating in the previous age, for these souls might be too good for that type of body. These forms would then have to be ensouled from the cosmos by something quite different from former human souls. Human souls will incarnate in the forms characterized only when they have made themselves ready for such an incarnation. **Supersensible cognition is bound to state what it perceives concerning this sphere, namely, that in the future indicated there will exist two human kingdoms, one good and one evil. But this does not abstractly deduce from the present state of human souls a future state appearing as though with the force of self-evident necessity. Evolution of human forms and evolution of soul-destinies must be sought by supersensible cognition on two quite separate paths.** [Thus] any attempt to mix the two in the conception of the world would be a remnant of a materialistic attitude that, if present, would project itself dangerously into the science of the supersensible.

VII. Details from the Realm of Spiritual Science

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THE DREAM STATE

The dream state has been characterized, in a certain respect, in the earlier chapter, Sleep and Death. It is to be conceived of, on the one hand, as being a remnant of the ancient picture consciousness that man possessed during the Moon evolution and also during a large part of Earth evolution. For evolution advances in such a fashion that the earlier states play over into the later. Thus, a remnant now appears in the human being during the dream state of what was previously a normal state. On the other hand, however, this state is different from ancient picture consciousness, for the ego, since its development, plays also into the processes of the astral body taking place in sleep while man is dreaming. Thus, in dreams we have a picture consciousness transformed through the presence of the ego. Since the ego, however, does not consciously carry on its activity upon the astral body during the state of dreaming, nothing that belongs to the realm of dream life must be considered as belonging to what in truth can lead to a spiritual-scientific knowledge of supersensible worlds. The same is true for what is often designated as vision, premonition, or second-sight (deuteroscopy). These come into existence through the ego's eliminating itself with the result that remnants of ancient states of consciousness arise. These have no direct use in spiritual science. What is observed by them cannot be considered in the true sense a result of the latter.

Christianity As Mystical Fact and the Mysteries of Antiquity

by Rudolf Steiner

Italicized notes and comments by Stephen D Evans
also emboldened selections [and bracketed alternate phrasings]

http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA008/English/RPC1961/GA008_index.html

Here I present another attempt to familiarize friends and family with the worldview of Rudolf Steiner, especially as it relates to the phenomenon of ASP, Awareness during Sleep Paralysis (see my Introduction for further background.) This is probably Steiner's best conceived written work, though I have done some studied editing and highlighting to help modern readers follow his progression of thought. My comments are the italicized paragraphs, interposing my own life experiences and theories concerning ASP as "accidental" initiation, similar to what the ancients purposely engineered for seekers of spiritual awakening.

*The sixth chapter, titled Egyptian Mystery Wisdom, comprises a thesis statement for this book, indeed a primary theme of Steiner's whole life work. Namely, "[That which] was enacted for the ancient cults of the **Mysteries within the Mystery-temples, through Christianity has been grasped as a world-historical fact.**"*

*Jesus said as much initially in regard to Jewish spiritualism, that he was sent first to call disciples from among the Jews, that everything he said and did was to fulfill, not replace, the Jewish scriptures. But **Christ's mission was the same for all spiritual disciplines, answering the query of every neophyte or priest of every age and culture of humanity seeking essential fulfillment.** This could be said of ascetics or hedonists, philosophers or prostitutes. But the mystery initiates especially --such as the Zoroastrian Magi (wise men of the East)-- were already prepared as non-Jews to recognize in the historical human Jesus the divine Chosen, first-born of all those who will be redeemed for eternal citizenship in the Creator's home world.*

*Every chapter prior to Egyptian Mystery Wisdom is preparatory or introductory. A reader might well **begin with that chapter, perhaps skimming only my highlights and italicized comments** through the*

*succeeding development --then go back to review the preceding as a second reading to the finish. **I would recommend a thorough understanding of this work as a preface to all of Steiner's books and lectures, especially for Christian readers;** this in hope of avoiding the common confusion of his worldview with modern New Age spiritisms. Though Anthroposophy acknowledges Christ to be the fulfillment of all spiritual questing, there is no question that the historical Christ Jesus -- born of a virgin, crucified and raised again-- stands above every other spiritual teacher, priest or demigod (Baal, Buddha, Romulus, Moses, Confucius, Mohammed) as the Redeemer chosen by the Father to restore mankind to its intended birthright. Nor does any other holy writing --Gita, Book of the Dead, Koran, Book of Mormon, etc. -- compare to the revealed Word of Heaven canonized by Jewish and Christian authorities. Even current Anthroposophists and Waldorf educators should know better and would, were they all to begin with this book. Steiner's intended alignment with original Christianity is thereby inescapable.*

Opening Quotes

Christianity is only in the beginning of its activity, and its real mission will be fulfilled when it is understood in its true spiritual form.



What Christianity bestows goes with us into all ages of time to come and will still be one of the essential impulses in humanity when religion, as we know it, is no longer in existence. **Even when religion as such has been transcended, Christianity will remain.** The fact that it was first of all a religion is connected with the evolutionary process of humanity. But **Christianity as a world-view is greater than all religions.**

— Rudolf Steiner
From lectures given in 1908

From the 1961 Forward by Paul Marshall Allen:

IN THIS BOOK Rudolf Steiner traces the path leading from the secret rituals of ancient Mystery sanctuaries to their ultimate fulfillment in the Mystery of Golgotha, accomplished by Christ “on the great stage of world history as an external fact.” Steiner shows how the currents of spiritual experience forming the science, art and religion of the ancient world, found their highest expression in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ — the Mystery of Golgotha. In the latter

Steiner saw **the central event in the evolution of cosmos, earth and man, the culminating point of the prehistorical and historical process**, which began with the divine word, “Let there be light.” In Christ’s Deed of Freedom he recognized the spiritual impulse in which alone can be found the significance and the destiny of all created things. Steiner considered “the Logos which became flesh” as the foundation for all contemporary religious striving, stating plainly, “Today it is no longer possible to find the spiritual unless we grasp the Mystery of Golgotha.” This book is a first step on the way to a truly modern comprehension of the Mystery of Golgotha — of the events leading up to it, and of the consequences of it in the early years of our era. It carries the reader from that time when men still recognized as concrete, living reality the birth of all things out of the divine Will, through the central moment of the Death on Golgotha, to the awakening of new possibilities for creation in the dawning light of the Spirit.

In addition to sharing with others the fruits of his own spiritual perception by means of books such as this, Steiner outlined a science of the spirit, involving a method of training suited to the capacities of men and women of today. He indicated how a person can awaken dormant faculties within himself, can learn to open his spiritual eyes, thus attaining a clear, conscious grasp of higher reality.

From the Introduction:

Rudolf Steiner — A Biographical Sketch 1961 by Alfred Heidenreich

In his thirty-sixth year ... Steiner moved to Berlin, and the next seven years were perhaps the most dramatic period in his life. His new position in Berlin was that of editor of the weekly, *Das Magazin für Litteratur* (something equivalent to the London *Saturday Review*)... This assignment brought Steiner into close social contact with the intellectual and artistic élite of Berlin at the time, and for some years he pitched his tent among them.... Side by side with these literary circles, or perhaps in polarity to them, Steiner was also drawn by objective interest and personal attraction into the camp of Haeckel and the militant monists... **Steiner refers to his experience as a “Soul’s Probation”** which he had to undergo... He speaks of the “tempests” which during those years **in Berlin** raged in his soul... **At the end of those “forty days in the wilderness”** — which were **in fact four years** — the thunderclouds lifted, the mist cleared, and he stood, to use his own phrase. “in solemn festival of knowledge before the Mystery of Golgotha.” **He had come to a first-hand experience of Christ and His active presence in the evolution of the world.**

We have now reached the point where we must venture into the great unknown: Steiner the seer, the Initiate.

It is a plain fact that in some form or other spiritual knowledge has existed throughout the ages. **Secret wisdom has never been absent from human history.**

But in Steiner it assumed a totally new form. In order to appreciate this revolutionary novelty, we must first have a picture of the old form.

The faculty of spiritual perception and secret wisdom is **obtained through certain organs in the “subtle body” of man**, to borrow a convenient term from Eastern Indian medicine. In Sanscrit these organs are **called “chakrams,”** generally translated into English as “lotus flowers.” They fulfill a function in the “subtle body” similar to our senses in the physical body. **They are usually dormant today, but can be awakened.** We can disregard for the moment the rites of Initiation which were employed in the Mystery Temples of the ancient world, and confine ourselves to the survival of more general **methods which today are still practiced** in many parts of the world. They all have one thing in common: they **operate through the vegetative system in man**, through bodily posture, through the control of breathing, through physical or mental exercises which work upon the solar plexus and the sympathetic nervous system. I realize that I am presenting a somewhat crude simplification. But nevertheless I am giving the essentials.

Steiner broke with all this. He began to operate from the opposite pole of the human organism, from pure thought. Thought, ordinary human thought, even if it is brilliant and positive, is at first something very weak. It does not possess the life, say, of our breathing, let alone the powerful life of our pulsating blood. It is, shall we say, flat, without substance; it is really lifeless. It is “pale thought,” as Shakespeare called it.

This **relative lifelessness of our thoughts is providential**, however. **If the living thoughts filling the Universe were to enter our consciousness just as they are, we would faint.** If the living idea in every created thing simply jumped into our consciousness with all its native force, it would blot us out. Fortunately, **our cerebro-spinal system exerts a kind of resistance** in the process; it functions like a resistor in an electric circuit; it is a sort of transformer, **reducing the violence of reality to such a degree that our mind can tolerate it and register it.** However, as a result, **we see only the shadows of reality** on the back wall of our Platonic cave, not reality itself.

Now one of the magic words in Steiner's philosophy with which he attempts to break this spell, is “*Erkaltung des Denkens.*” It means putting force, life into thinking, through thinking, within thinking. All his basic philosophic works, notably the *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, and many of his **exercises, are directed to this purpose.** If they are followed, sooner or later the moment arrives when **thinking becomes *leibfrei*, i.e. independent of the bodily instrument, when it works itself free from the cerebrospinal system.**

This is **at first a most disturbing experience.** One feels like a man who has pushed off from the shore and who must now strive with might and main to maintain himself in the raging sea. **The sheer power of cosmic thought is such that at first one [seems to lose] one's identity.** And perhaps one *would* lose it for good, if it

were not for a fact which now emerges from the hidden mysteries of Christianity. **One does not finally lose one's identity because He Himself has walked the waves and extended a helping hand** to Peter who ventured out prematurely. Gradually the waves seem to calm down, and a condition ensues which Steiner expresses in a wonderful phrase: **“Thinking itself becomes a body which draws into itself. as its soul, the Spirit of the Universe.”**

This is a stage which, broadly speaking, Steiner had attained at the point of his biography which we have reached. Now he made a discovery which was not known to him before. [Steiner] **discovered that this “living thinking” could awaken the *chakrams* from “above,” just as in the old way they could be stimulated from “below.”** Thought which at first in the normal and natural psychosomatic process “died” on the place of the skull, but which through systematic exercises had risen again to the level of cosmic reality, could now impart life to the dormant organs of spiritual perception which have been implanted into man by Him who created him in His image. From about the turn of the century Steiner began to pursue this path with ever greater determination, and gradually developed the three forms of Higher Knowledge which he called Imagination: a *higher seeing* of the spiritual world in revealing images; Inspiration: a *higher hearing* of the spiritual world, through which it reveals its creative forces and its creative order; Intuition: the stage at which an *intuitive penetration* into the sphere of Spiritual Beings becomes possible.

With these unfolding powers Steiner now developed up to his death in 1925, in twenty-five momentous years, that truly vast and awe-inspiring body of spiritual and practical knowledge to which he gave the name “Anthroposophy.” (Incidentally, this word was first coined by Thomas Vaughan, a brother of the English mystical poet, Henry Vaughan, in the 17th century.) Anthroposophy literally means wisdom of man or the wisdom concerning man, but in his later years Steiner himself interpreted it on occasion as “an adequate consciousness of being human.” In this interpretation the moral achievement of Steiner's work, his mission, his message to a bewildered humanity which has lost “an adequate consciousness of being human,” to which Man has become “the Unknown,” is summed up. This monumental work lies before us today and is waiting to be fully discovered by our Age — in some 170 books and in the published transcripts of nearly 6,000 lectures.

To those who have been attracted to this present publication by its title and its reference to Christianity, it will be of particular interest to hear that among those foundations which came into being during the last phase of Steiner's anthroposophical work was a Movement for Religious Renewal, formed by a body of Christian ministers, students and other young pioneers who had found in Rudolf Steiner “a man sent from God,” able to show the way to a true reconciliation of faith and knowledge, of religion and science. This Movement is known today as “The Christian Community” and has centers in many cities in the Old and New World.

* * *

Christianity as Mystical Fact and the Mysteries of Antiquity holds a special place in the story of his remarkable and dedicated life... ushered in a new period in the understanding of the basic facts of Christianity as well as in Steiner's own life.

Steiner considered the phrase “Mystical Fact” in the title to be very important. “I did not intend simply to describe the mystical content of Christianity,” he says in his autobiography. “I attempted to show that **in the ancient Mysteries cult-images were given of cosmic events, which occurred later on the field of actual history in the Mystery of Golgotha as a *Fact* transplanted from the cosmos into the earth.**”

Points of View

Steiner begins this presentation with an attempt to distinguish between a truly scientific approach and an otherwise ‘scientistic’ viewpoint.

It is becoming more and more impossible to describe the spiritual requirements of the “life of the soul” without reference to the methods of thinking and the conclusions of natural science... Ideas derived from natural science conquer our thought-life with gathering momentum, and our unwilling hearts follow hesitantly and with apprehension... [T]here is a power inherent in natural scientific thought which convinces the observant that a modern conception of the world cannot exclude its impressions. [While] several of the side-growths of natural scientific thought [deserve rejection], this method of thought has gained widespread recognition and attracts people as if by magic. The situation is not altered by the fact that isolated individuals can see how *true* science, through its own power, has “long” led beyond the “shallow doctrines of force and matter” taught by materialism. It appears to be far more important to heed those who boldly declare that a new religion should be built on natural scientific ideas. Even if such people seem shallow and superficial to those who know the deeper spiritual requirements of humanity, nevertheless they should be noted because they claim attention in the present time, and there is good reason to believe that they will win increasing recognition in the future. And those also must be considered who have allowed their heads to take precedence over their hearts. These **people are unable to free their intellects from natural scientific ideas.** They are oppressed by the need for proof. **But the religious needs of their souls cannot be satisfied by these** natural scientific ideas. The latter offer too comfortless a perspective. Why be enthusiastic about beauty, truth and goodness if in the end everything is to be swept away into nothingness like a bubble of inflated brain tissue? This is a feeling which oppresses many people like a nightmare. Therefore scientific ideas also oppress them, pressing their claims with tremendous authoritative force. As long as they can, these **people remain blind to the discord in their [own] souls.** Indeed, they comfort themselves by saying that true clarity in these matters is denied the human soul. They think in accordance with natural science so long as the experience of their senses and logic demand it, but they keep to the [counter-]religious sentiments in

which they have been educated, **preferring to remain in darkness concerning these matters, a darkness which clouds their understanding.** They have not the courage to struggle through to clarity.

There can be no doubt whatever that **the method of thought derived from natural science is the greatest power in modern spiritual life.** And one who speaks of the spiritual concerns of mankind may not pass it by heedlessly. Nevertheless it is **also true that the method by which it attempts to satisfy spiritual needs is shallow and superficial.** If this were the right method the outlook would indeed be comfortless. Would it not be depressing to be forced to agree with those who say,

“Thought is a form of force. We *walk* with the same force with which we think. Man is an organism that changes several forms of force into thought-force. Man is a machine into which we put what we call food, and produce what we call thought. Think of that wonderful chemistry by which bread was changed into the divine tragedy of *Hamlet*!”

This is quoted from a lecture of Robert G. Ingersoll, titled *The Gods*. It is irrelevant that such thoughts, casually expressed, apparently receive little recognition. The main point is that countless people, influenced by the natural scientific method of thought, seem compelled to assume an attitude in line with the above quotation, even when they believe they are not doing so.

The situation would indeed be comfortless if natural science itself forced us to the credo advanced by many of its newer prophets. Matters would be entirely comfortless for one who has become convinced from the content of this natural science that its method of thought is valid and unshakable in the realm of nature. Such a person must say to himself: However much people may quarrel over individual questions ... about the [evolutionary significance] of *natural selection*, natural science itself moves on [inevitably], and [demands] increasing [acceptance].

But are the demands made by natural science really as they are described by some of its representatives? The behavior of these representatives themselves proves that this is not the case. **Their behavior in their own field is not such** as many describe and demand in other fields. Would Darwin and Ernst Haeckel ever have made their great discoveries about the evolution of life if, instead of observing life and the structure of living beings, they had gone into the laboratory to make chemical experiments with tissue cut out of an organism? Would Lyell have been able to describe the development of the crust of the earth if, instead of examining strata and their contents, he had analyzed the chemical qualities of innumerable stones? Let us [actually] follow in the footsteps of these explorers who appear as monumental figures in the development of modern science! **We shall then apply to the higher regions of spiritual life what they have applied in the field of the observation of nature.** Then we shall [avoid the trap of believing] we have understood the essence of the “divine” tragedy of *Hamlet* by saying that a wonderful chemical process transformed a certain quantity of food into that tragedy.

It is therefore quite true that **one who is investigating the nature of spirit** can learn from natural science. He really **needs only to do as science does**. But he must not allow himself to be misled by what individual representatives of natural science would dictate to him. He must **investigate in the spiritual domain as they do in the physical, but he need not adopt their opinions [and presuppositions] about the spiritual world, confused as they are by their exclusive consideration of physical phenomena.**

We shall act in conformity with natural science when we study the spiritual evolution of man [but only when done] as impartially as the naturalist observes the material world. Then in the domain of spiritual life **we shall admittedly be led to a method of consideration differing from the purely natural scientific method as geology differs from pure physics** or the investigation of the evolution of life from research into purely chemical laws. We shall be led to higher methods which, although they cannot be those of natural science, yet hold good in the same sense... — Such methods alone can lead to penetration into spiritual developments like Christianity... **Anyone applying these methods may provoke the opposition of many who believe they [alone] are thinking scientifically, but nevertheless he will know himself to be in full accord with a truly scientific method of thought.**

An investigator of this kind must also go beyond a merely historical examination of the documents relating to spiritual life. This is necessary just because of the attitude of mind he has acquired from the consideration of natural occurrences. When a chemical law is explained it is of little value to describe the retorts, dishes and pincers which have led to its discovery. And in explaining the beginning of Christianity, it is of just as much or as little value to ascertain the historical sources drawn upon by the Evangelist Luke, or those from which the book of *Revelation* of John was compiled.

This latter comment appears in reference to Radical and Documentary schools of biblical “form” or “redactive” criticism. During the prior century, they would analyze manuscripts for indications of original sources. As I understand it, they claimed to apply modern scientific method, intending to separate historical record from legend. Thus any scriptural references to the supernatural or interpersonal deity were categorically rejected as unreliable legend by definition of their naturalistic and materialistic worldviews. The methodology’s rationalistic bias and logical faults were demonstrated by later scholars. If ‘findings’ of these textual critics are referenced anymore, its only authority is by virtue of decades-long repetition.

Mysteries and Mystery Wisdom

SOMETHING LIKE A VEIL OF SECRECY conceals the manner whereby spiritual needs were satisfied for those within the older civilizations who sought a deeper religious and cognitive life than was offered by the religions of the people. We are led into the obscurity of enigmatic cults when we inquire into the satisfaction of these needs. Each individual who finds such satisfaction withdraws himself for some time from our observation. We see that **the religion of the people cannot give him what his heart seeks**. He acknowledges the gods, but he knows that in the ordinary conceptions of the gods the great enigmas of existence are not disclosed.

The story of my own spiritual quest would be prefaced just so. Likewise most ASP sojourners. There is this almost unquenchable thirst for things spiritual, yet the dogma and sacraments offered by even the most radically spiritualistic street religions is never enough and never quite right. I felt a misfit and secret apostate within my own religious community, even while believing fervently every tenet of faith and regarded by others as the ultimate young warrior of our sect. It was agonizingly lonely at times, even to the point of contemplating suicide -- perhaps to escape the guilt of pretense, posing as if I could ever truly become a champion of their fellowship. I could hardly confide in my own parents, let alone church leaders. And when I finally did disclose to elders some of the horrors and adventures of ASP, they did not over-react, to their credit, fearing for my soul and oppression of demons. However, neither could they ever appreciate my spiritual plight or ambition, having never confronted anything quite so reality-shattering as ASP themselves; even as Pentecostal spirit-baptized believers evidenced by 'speaking in tongues'.

He seeks a wisdom which is carefully guarded by a community of priest-sages. He seeks refuge in this community for his striving soul. **If the sages find him [spiritually] mature they lead him step by step to higher insight, in a manner hidden from the eyes of those outside.** What happens to him now is concealed from the uninitiated. For a time he appears to be entirely removed from the physical world. He appears to be transported into a secret world. — And when **he is returned to the light of day a different, entirely transformed personality** stands before us. This personality cannot find words sufficiently sublime to express how significant his experiences were for him. He appears to himself **as though he had gone through death and awakened to a new and higher life**, not merely figuratively, but in highest reality. And it is clear to him that **no one can rightly understand his words who has not had the same experience.**

Thus it was with those persons who through the Mysteries were initiated into that secret wisdom, withheld from the people, and which shed light upon the highest questions. **This “secret” religion of the elect existed side by side with the religion of the people.** So far as history is concerned, its source fades into the obscurity where the origin of peoples is lost. We find this “secret” religion everywhere among ancient peoples insofar as we can gain insight concerning them. **The sages of these peoples speak of the Mysteries with the greatest reverence.** — What was concealed in them? And what did they reveal to one who was initiated into them?

The enigma becomes still more puzzling when we realize that **at the same time the ancient [peoples] regarded the Mysteries as something dangerous.** The way leading to the secrets of existence went through a world of terrors. And woe to him who tried to reach them unworthily. — There was no greater crime than the “betrayal” of these secrets to the uninitiated. The “traitor” was punished with death and confiscation of property. We know that the poet Aeschylus was accused of having brought something from the Mysteries to the stage. He was able to escape death only by fleeing to the altar of Dionysus and producing legal evidence that he was not an initiate.

What the ancients say about these secrets is rich in meaning and can be variously interpreted. **The initiate is convinced that it is sinful to say what he knows and also that it is sinful for the uninitiated to hear it.**

I still experience a check from my spirit, an innate warning against discussing at length the possibility of metaphysical terrors, even with those who recall having suffered an ASP-like episode... that being if it is not also apparent that they may be so helped and comforted. Narrating to another an ASP adventure, simply for a ‘wow’ effect --this bears a disconcerting two-edged consequence. It either estranges one from discourse at the outset, or it awakens in the listener untimely memories, curiosities and maybe longings which tend to make them prone now to an especially violent ASP attack. Then they recoil (appropriately) in horror, as if they had been cursed or infected with some kind of spiritual malady. And if it weren't for a prevailing disbelief that such things could be real, they might launch a public castigation of me, the storyteller. Happily, however, they usually just cut off further contact, as with the first result.

Plutarch speaks of the terror of those about to be initiated, comparing their state of mind to a **preparation for death.** Initiation had to be **preceded by a special mode of life.** This aimed at **bringing sensuality under the control of the spirit.** Fasting, solitary life, mortification and certain exercises of the soul served this purpose. The **things to which man clings in ordinary life were to lose all value** for him. The

whole course of his experience and feeling had to take a different direction. — There can be no doubt about the meaning of such exercises and tests. **The wisdom to be offered to the neophyte could produce the right effect upon his soul only if he had previously changed his lower world of experience.** He was inducted into the life of the spirit. He was to behold a higher world. He could find no relationship to this [spiritual] world without previous exercises and tests. Everything depended just on this relationship.

Whoever wishes to understand these things correctly must [have experienced personally this changed life of] cognition. He must [recognize the] two widely divergent [perspectives regarding the world as revealed by the highest cognition]. — **At first, the [material] world surrounding man is his [only] real world.** He feels, hears and sees its processes. Because he perceives them with his senses he calls them real and thinks about them in order to gain insight into their connections. — On the other hand, **what rises in his soul is not real to him at first** in the same sense. It is “mere” thoughts and ideas. At most, **he sees in them pictures of material reality.** The [pictures] themselves have no reality. One cannot [materially] touch them; one cannot [physically] hear or see them.

Another relationship to the world exists. **A person who clings at all costs to the kind of reality described above, will hardly grasp [what this means, but it] enters the lives of certain people at a [definite] moment. Their whole relationship to the [physical] world is reversed. [Now they] call truly real the images which arise in the spiritual life of their soul. They assign only a lower form of reality to what the senses hear, touch and see.** They know they cannot *prove* [empirically] what they say. They know they can only *recount* their new experiences. And they know that in recounting them to others they are in the position of a man who can see and who imparts his visual impressions to one born blind. They undertake the communication of their inner experiences, trusting that they are surrounded by others, who, although their spiritual eye is still closed, have a logical understanding which can be strengthened through the power of what they hear. **They believe in humanity and wish to open spiritual eyes.** They can only **offer the fruits their spirit itself has gathered**; whether another sees the fruits depends upon [his capacity to comprehend] what is seen by a spiritual eye [whether or not he himself has spiritual sight].

Something existing in man at first prevents him from seeing with the eyes of the spirit. First of all he is not here [in a material body] for this purpose. He is what his senses represent him to be, and his intellect is only the interpreter and judge of his senses. These [physical] senses would fulfill *their mission badly if they did not insist upon the truth and infallibility of their evidence.* From its own point of view, an eye must uphold the absolute reality of its perceptions, otherwise it would be a bad eye. The eye is quite right, so far as it goes. [Yet it] is not deprived of its rights by the spiritual eye. This spiritual eye allows us to see what the material eye sees, but in a higher light. Nothing the material eye sees is denied. But a new radiance, hitherto unseen, shines from it. Then we know that what we first saw was

but a lower reality. We see this still, but it is immersed in something higher, in the spirit. Now it is a question of whether we experience and feel what we see. Whoever is able to bring *living* experience and feeling [only] to the material world, he will regard the higher world as a Fata Morgana or as “mere” phantasy-images. **His feelings are directed entirely toward the material world. When he tries to grasp spirit images, he seizes emptiness.** When he gropes after them, they withdraw from him. They are “mere” thoughts. He thinks them; he does not live in them. They are pictures, **less real to him than fleeting dreams.** Compared with his reality they are like images made of froth which vanish as they encounter the massive, solidly-built reality of which his senses tell him. — **It is a different matter for the person whose experience and feelings with regard to reality have changed.** For him that reality has lost its absolute stability, its unquestioned value. **His senses and his feelings need not become blunted. But they begin to doubt their absolute authority;** they leave space for something else. The world of the spirit begins to animate this space.

The following could just as well describe the ‘accidental’ ASP experience:

At this point a dreadful possibility exists. A man may lose his experience and feeling of direct reality without finding any new reality opening before him. He is then suspended in a void. He seems to himself dead. The old values have disappeared and no new ones have taken their place. The world and man no longer exist for him. — This is by no means a mere possibility. At some time or other **it happens to everyone who wishes to attain higher cognition.** He reaches a point where to him the spirit interprets all [physical] life as death. Then he is no longer in the world. **He is beneath the world** — in the nether world. **He accomplishes the journey to Hades.** It is well for him if he is not submerged. **It is well for him if a new world [readily] opens before him. Either he disappears [feeling himself lost], or is confronted by a new self.** In the latter case a new sun and a new earth appear to him. **Out of spiritual fire the whole world has been reborn for him.**

Thus the initiates describe what happened to them through the Mysteries. Menippus relates that he journeyed to Babylon in order to be **taken to Hades and brought back again** by the successors of Zoroaster. He says that on his travels he swam across the great water and that he passed through fire and ice. We hear that the mystics were terrified by a drawn sword and that “blood flowed.” We understand such sayings when we know the point of transition from lower to higher cognition. We ourselves have felt how all solid matter, all the material world, has dissolved into water; we have lost the ground from beneath our feet. Everything we had previously experienced as living has been killed. The spirit has passed through material life as a sword pierces a warm body; we have seen the blood of sensuality flow.

But a new life has appeared. We have **climbed up from the nether world.** The orator Aristides relates, **“I thought I touched the god and felt him draw near,**

and I was then between waking and sleeping. My spirit was so light that one who is not ‘initiated’ cannot speak of it nor understand it.” This new existence is not subject to the laws of lower life. Growth and decay do not affect it. Much may be said about the eternal, but one's words will be “but sound and smoke,” (Goethe, *Faust*, Part I, 3456–3458) who does not speak of the same thing as those who speak of it after the journey to Hades. **The initiates have a new conception of life and death. Now for the first time they are entitled to speak about immortality.** They know that whoever speaks of immortality without the knowledge gained through initiation does not understand it. **The uninitiated [would attempt to attribute immortality to the physical body remaining] subject to the laws of growth and decay.** — The mystics did not desire to gain the mere *conviction* that the kernel of life is immortal. In their view, such a conviction would be worthless. This is because they believed the non-mystic simply does not have the eternal living within him. If [the uninitiated] were to speak of the eternal, he would speak of nothing [being a mere ideal]. The mystics seek the eternal itself. **They must first awaken the eternal within themselves; then they can speak of it.**

This is, of course, the very message of Jesus and the Evangelical Christian church. The scientific tenet that matter is never destroyed, only transformed back to the energy from whence it sprang-- even some ‘christian’ persuasions adopt this sub-spiritual definition of life. But they fail --as do the most progressive scientists preaching Intelligent Design-- to grasp the Life Eternal and Personal nature of Form Himself who is able with a Word to lend material shape to chaotic energies.

Therefore Plato's severe saying has full reality for them: Whoever is not initiated is submerged in the mire, and he alone enters eternity who has experienced mystical life. Only in this way can the words in the fragment from Sophocles be understood:

“Thrice happy they, who, having seen these rites,
Then pass to Hades: there to these alone
Is granted *life*, all others evil find.”

Are not *dangers* described in speaking of the Mysteries? **Is it not robbing men of happiness, of the most valuable part of life, to lead them to the gate of the nether world?** Terrible is the responsibility incurred by such an act. And yet, may we shirk this responsibility? These were the questions **the initiate had to ask himself.** In his opinion **his knowledge was to the soul of the people as light is to darkness. But in this darkness dwells innocent happiness.**

The sufferer of nightly, even hourly, ASP interruptions wants nothing more than the restoration of the sweet oblivion of darkness we call peaceful sleep. I have yet to hear of any who would choose unreservedly to trade their innocent blindness for these confused

glimpses of another sun and earth. This awareness has been thrust upon them unasked. That is why I mark this generation as transitional and 'elect', having been volunteered as disinterested witnesses -- selected from among all spiritualist and spiritually agnostic persuasions-- for reasons beyond their knowledge or understanding.

The mystics were of the opinion that **this happiness should not be interfered with wantonly**. For what would have happened in the first place **had the mystic "betrayed" his secret?** He would have spoken words, **nothing but words**. Nothing at all would have happened through the experiences and feelings, which should have evoked the spirit from these words. For this, preparation, exercises, tests and the complete change of sense-experience would have been necessary. Without these, **the hearer would have been flung into emptiness, into nothingness**. He would have been **deprived of what gave him happiness without being able to receive anything in exchange**. It might be said that one could not have taken anything from him. For certainly mere words could not change his life of experience. He could only have *experienced* reality through the objects of his senses. One could have given him **nothing but a dreadful, life-destroying apprehension**. This could be regarded only as a crime.

The above is **no longer fully valid today for the acquisition of spiritual cognition**. The latter can be understood conceptually **because modern man has a capacity to form concepts which the ancients lacked**. Today people can be found who have cognition of the spiritual world through their own experience; they can be confronted by others who comprehend these experiences conceptually. Such a capacity for forming concepts was lacking in the ancients.

Ancient Mystery wisdom is like a hothouse plant which must be cherished and cared for in seclusion. To bring it into the atmosphere of everyday conceptions is to put it in an element in which it cannot flourish. It withers away to nothing before the caustic verdict of modern science and logic. Let us therefore divest ourselves for a time of all the education we have received through the microscope, telescope and the ways of thought derived from natural science; let us purify our hands which have become clumsy and have been too busy dissecting and experimenting, so that we may enter the pure temple of the Mysteries. For this **a truly unprejudiced mind is necessary**.

For the mystic, everything depends primarily upon the frame of mind in which he approaches what he feels to be the highest, the answers to the enigmas of existence. Particularly **in our time**, when **only things pertaining to physical science are recognized as deserving cognition**, it is difficult to believe that for the highest things, everything depends on a frame of mind. Cognition thereby becomes an intimate concern of each personality. For the mystic, however, it is so. Tell someone the solution of the world-enigma! Hand it to him ready-made! The mystic will consider it nothing but empty sound if the individual does not confront this solution in the right manner. The solution is nothing in itself; it disintegrates if it

does not kindle in his feeling the particular fire which is essential. **Let a divine being approach you! It may be nothing or everything. Nothing, if you meet it in the frame of mind in which you confront everyday things. Everything, if you are prepared and attuned to it.** What it is in itself [what it is made of] is a matter which [should] not concern you; **the point is whether it leaves you as you were or makes a different man of you.** But this depends solely on you. You must have been prepared by the education and development of the most intimate forces of your personality so that what the divine is able to evoke may be kindled and released in you. **What is brought to you depends upon the reception you prepare for it.**

Plutarch has given an account of this education; he has spoken of **the greeting the mystic offers the divine being who approaches him:**

“For the god addresses each one of us as we approach him here with the words ‘Know Thyself,’ as a form of welcome, which certainly is in no wise of less import than ‘Hail;’ and we in turn reply to him ‘Thou art,’ as rendering unto him a form of address which is truthful, free from deception and the only one befitting him alone, the assertion of *Being*. — The fact is that we really have no share in Being, [because] everything of a mortal nature is at some stage between coming into existence and passing away, and presents only a dim and uncertain semblance [or] appearance of itself; and if you apply the whole force of your mind in your desire to apprehend it, it is like unto the violent grasping of water, which, by squeezing and compression, loses the handful enclosed, as it spurts through the fingers; [Likewise] Reason, pursuing the exceedingly clear appearance of every one of those things that are susceptible to modification and change, is baffled by the one aspect of its coming into being, and by the other of its passing away; and thus [Reason] is unable to apprehend a single thing that is abiding or really existent. ‘It is impossible to step twice in the same river’ are the words of Heraclitus, nor is it possible to lay hold twice of any mortal substance in a permanent state; by the suddenness and swiftness of the change in it there ‘comes dispersion and, at another time, a gathering together;’ or, rather, not at another time nor later, but at the same instant it both settles into its place and forsakes its place; ‘it is coming and going.’ Wherefore that which is born of [mortality] never attains unto Being because of the unceasing and unstaying process of generation, which, ever bringing change, produces from the seed an embryo, then a babe, then a child and in due course a boy, a young man, a mature man, an elderly man, an old man, causing the first generations and ages to pass away by those which succeed them. But we have a ridiculous fear of one death, we who have already died so many deaths, and still are dying! For not only is it true, as Heraclitus used to say, that the death of fire is birth for air, and the death of air is birth for water, but the case is even more clearly to be seen in our own selves: the man in his prime passes away when the old man comes into existence, the young man passes away into the man in his prime, the child into the young man, and the babe into the child. Dead is the man of yesterday, for he is passed into the man of to-day; and the man of to-day is dying as he passes into the man of to-morrow. Nobody remains one person, nor is one person; but we become many persons, even as matter is drawn about some one semblance and common mold

with imperceptible movement. Else how is it that, if we [truly] remain the same persons, we take delight in some things now, whereas earlier we took delight in different things; that we love or hate opposite things, and so too with our admirations and our disapprovals, and that we use other words and feel other emotions and have no longer the same personal appearance, the same external form, nor the same purposes in mind? For without change it is not reasonable that a person should have different experiences and emotions; and if he changes, he is not the same person, he has no permanent being, but changes his very nature as one personality in him succeeds to another. Our senses, through ignorance of reality, falsely tell us that what appears to be is.” (Plutarch, *Moralia, De E apud Delphos*, 392 A–E)

This sermon by Plutarch about the paradox of being, it also describes the greatest challenge of consciousness confronting one during ASP. Steiner treats this elsewhere as the initiate's striving against the Guardian of the Threshold, much like Jacob's battle with the god and Moses' meeting with the I AM. We don't want to greet or otherwise acknowledge the Being of immaterial entities encountered within aetheric space. Yet until one does in fact admit first that 'I am', then that he or she or it IS-- only then can one embrace the next realization: This seeming Other is truly I; it is Me somehow embodied in such a way that I may finally know myself, admit my guilt and turn away from an evil destiny toward Life instead.

Plutarch often shows himself to be an initiate. What he portrays for us here is an essential condition of the life of a mystic. Man acquires a wisdom by means of which **his spirit sees through the illusory character of material life**. Everything the material nature regards as existence, as reality, is plunged into the stream of evolving life. And man himself fares the same as the other things of the world. He disintegrates before the eyes of his spirit; his totality is dissolved into parts, into transitory phenomena. Birth and death lose their distinctive significance; they become moments of coming into existence, and decay like everything else which happens. The highest cannot be found in connection with growth and decay. It can only be sought in something truly lasting, which looks back to what has been and forward to what is to come. To find what looks backward and forward is a higher stage of cognition. It is the spirit, which is revealed in and through the material world. **This spirit has nothing to do with material growth. It does not come into existence nor decay in the same manner as do sense phenomena.**

Here is another one of the ironies of perception of 'aetheric' appearances. I enter that world retaining the assumptions conditioned by material existence. I expect that 'solid' means permanent, that anything prone to disappear at a word cannot be either solid or

enduring. I must give up the belief, finally, that a thing is proven real by my perception of it, when in truth it is only a passing form of a previously unseen reality that my aetheric senses have shaped. That is just as true on this side; only my physical senses also deliver a linear perception of time, so the passing of form to form seems slower. My physical world thereby lends a comforting feeling of predictability, a deception of permanence. Therefore the persistent horror, the sting of Death, when every treasured possession is inevitably proven merely another transition. A house (meaning my self-made worldview) built on sand is doomed to sink into nothing.

Whoever lives only in the world of the senses has this spirit latent within him; whoever sees through the illusory character of the world of the senses has [spirit] as a revealed reality within him. Whoever achieves this insight **has developed a new organ** within him. Something has taken place in him, as in a plant which at first has only green leaves and then puts forth a colored blossom. Certainly, the forces through which the flower developed were already latent in the plant before the blossom came into existence, but they became reality only when this latter took place. **Divine spiritual forces also are latent in the purely material man**, but they are a revealed reality only in the mystic. Therein lies the transformation that has taken place in the mystic. By his development he has added something new to the existing world. The material world has made a material man of him and then left him to himself. Nature has fulfilled her mission. Her potential connection with the forces working within man is exhausted. But these forces themselves are not yet exhausted. They lie **as though spellbound** in the purely natural man, **awaiting their release**. They cannot release themselves; **they vanish into nothing if man himself does not grasp them and develop them further, if he does not awaken to real existence what slumbers hidden within him.** — Nature [imbued with spiritual force] evolves from the least to the most perfect. Nature leads beings by an extensive series of stages from the inanimate through all forms of life up to material man. Man in his material nature opens his eyes and becomes aware of himself in the material world as a real being, capable of transforming itself. He still observes in himself the forces out of which this material nature is born. These forces are not the object of transformation because they gave rise to the transformation. **Man bears [these spiritual forces] within himself as an indication that something lives within him, transcending his material perception.** What may [yet] come into existence through these forces is not yet present. Man **feels something light up within him which has created everything, including himself**; and he feels that **this something will spur him to higher achievement**. It is within him; it existed before his material appearance, and will be there after it. Through it he has come into being, and he may grasp it, and himself participate in his creation. **Such feelings lived in the ancient mystic after initiation. He felt the eternal, the divine.** His deeds will become a part of the creative activity of the divine. He may say to himself: I have **discovered a higher “I” within me**, but this “I” surpasses the boundaries of my material growth; it

existed before my birth, it will exist after my death. Creatively this “I” has worked throughout eternity; creatively it will work in eternity. **My material personality is a creation of this “I”.** But it has incorporated me within it; creatively it works in me; I am a part of it. **What I am now able to create is something higher than the material. My personality is only a medium for this creative force, for this divine, within me. In this way the mystic experienced his apotheosis.**

The mystic named the force thus kindled within him, his true spirit. He was the result of this spirit. It seemed to him **as though a new being had entered him and taken possession of his organs.** This was **a being which stood between his material personality and the Sovereign Power of the cosmos, the Godhead.** The mystic sought his true spirit. He said to himself, I have become man in the great natural world. But nature has not completed her task. I myself must take over this completion. However, I cannot do this in the gross realm of nature to which my material personality also belongs. Whatever can develop in this realm has developed. Therefore I must escape from this realm. I must continue to build in the sphere of the spiritual, where nature has stood still. I must create for myself a breathing space which cannot be found in outer nature. **This breathing space was prepared for the mystics in the Mystery temples. There the forces slumbering within them were awakened; there they were transformed into higher creative spirit-natures.** This transformation was a delicate process. It could not endure the rough elements of the outdoors. When the process was completed, through it man had become a rock grounded in the eternal, able to defy all storms. But he was not permitted to believe that he could communicate his experiences in their direct form to others.

Plutarch informs us that in the Mysteries “it is possible to gain the clearest reflections and adumbrations of the truth about the daemons.” (*see Note 6*) And from Cicero we learn that “those occult Mysteries ... when interpreted and explained prove to have more to do with natural science than with theology.” (*see Note 7*) From such communications we see clearly that **for the mystic there existed a higher insight into natural science than the religion of the people could give.** Moreover this shows that the daemons, that is, the **spiritual beings, and the gods themselves required explanation.** Beings are approached who are of a higher nature than the daemons and gods. And this is in the nature of Mystery wisdom. **The [uninitiated] people pictured gods and daemons in images taken entirely from the world of material reality.** Surely one who could penetrate the essence of the eternal was bound to lose confidence in the eternalness of such gods! **How could Zeus, as the people pictured him, be eternal when he had the characteristics of a mortal being?** — One thing was clear to the mystic: man attains his idea of the gods in a different manner from his ideas about other things. An object in the external world compels me to form a definitive idea of it. In contrast to this the formation of [materialistic] ideas of the gods has something free, even arbitrary, about it. The compulsion of the external world is lacking. Reflection teaches us that with the gods we imagine something for which there is no external [verification]. **This puts man into a state of logical uncertainty. He begins to feel**

that he [may have been] the creator of his gods. [Yet the seeker] asks himself: How [then] do I come to transcend physical reality in my world of ideas? The mystic must devote himself to such thoughts. The doubts which [before initiation] beset him were justified. **[Now beholding such beings directly] he could think** to himself: Let us simply look at all these [common] ideas of the gods. **Are they [truly similar to the creatures we meet in the world of the senses?** Has not man created them by mentally adding or subtracting this or that quality essentially belonging to the world of the senses? The barbarian who loves hunting creates a heaven for himself in which the most glorious hunts of the gods take place. The Greek peoples Olympus with divinities having their prototype in the reality which is well known to him.

The philosopher Xenophanes (575–480 B.C.) referred to this fact with crude logic. We know that the older Greek philosophers were absolutely dependent on Mystery wisdom. This will be demonstrated in relation to Heraclitus in particular. For this reason the saying of Xenophanes can be accepted without reservation as a conviction based on mystic knowledge. He says:

“But men have the idea that gods are born,
And wear their clothes, and have both voice and shape.
But had the oxen or the lions hands,
Or could with hands depict a work like men,
Were beasts to draw the semblance of the gods,
The horses would them like to horses sketch,
To oxen, oxen, and their bodies make
Of such a shape as to themselves belongs.” (*see Note 8*)

Through such insight **man may become doubtful of everything divine.** He may **reject the legends of the gods and acknowledge as reality only that what his material perceptions compel him to acknowledge.** But **the mystic did not become such a doubter.** He understood that the doubter was like a plant which said to itself: My colored blossom is vain and worthless, for I am complete in my green leaves; what I add to them only increases the illusory appearance. **But neither could the mystic remain content with the gods thus created, the gods of the people.** If the plant could think, it would understand that the forces which had created the green leaves are also destined to create the colored blossom. And it would not rest until it had investigated these forces for itself in order to see them. So it was for the mystic in relation to the gods of the people. **He did not deny them nor declare them to be vain,** but he knew that they were created by man. The same natural forces, the **same divine elements which work creatively in nature also work creatively in the mystic.** In him also **they engender [true] ideas of the gods.** He wishes to see **this force which is creating gods.** It is not like the gods of the people; it is **something higher [than the common gods].** Xenophanes also indicates this:

One God there is, 'midst gods and men supreme;
In form, in mind, unlike to mortal men. (*see Note 9*)

This God was also the God of the Mysteries. He could be called “a hidden God,” for nowhere — so it was thought — is He to be found by the purely material man. Direct your gaze outward toward objects; you find no divinity. Exert your intelligence; you may understand the laws by which things come into existence and decay, but your intellect shows you nothing divine. Saturate your fantasy with religious feeling; you can create pictures of beings which you may take to be gods, but your intellect dissects them for you, for it proves to you that you yourself created them, and borrowed the material for their creation from the material world. **Insofar as you, as intellectual man, consider the things about you, you must deny the gods. For God is not there for your senses or intellect, which explain material perceptions. God is magically concealed in the world. And you need His own force in order to find Him. This force you must awaken within yourself.** These are the teachings which a neophyte of ancient times received. Then began for him the great cosmic drama in which he was engulfed alive. This drama consisted of nothing less than the release of the spellbound God. **Where is God? This was the question the mystic put before his soul. God is not, but nature is. He must be found [hidden] in nature.** In nature He has found an enchanted tomb. The words, “**God is Love,**” are grasped by the mystic in a higher sense. For **God has carried this Love to its uttermost. He has given Himself in infinite Love; He has diffused Himself; He has divided Himself into the manifold variety of natural things; [therefore] they live [by virtue of His loving sacrifice];** He does not live in [natural things]. He rests in them [*on this the Sabbath day of Creation*]. He [does live, however] in man [*who was made a living soul*]. And man can experience the life of God in himself. If man is to let Him come to cognition [*know God personally*] he must release this cognition creatively in himself. —Man now gazes into himself. As a hidden creative force, as yet unincarnated, works the divinity in his soul. In his soul is a place where the spellbound divinity can come to life again. The soul is the mother who by nature can conceive the divinity. **If the soul is fructified by nature it will give birth to a divinity. Out of the marriage of the soul with nature a divinity will be born. This is no longer a “hidden” divinity; it is revealed. It has life, perceptible life, and walks among men. It is the released spirit in man, the offspring of the spellbound divinity.** It is not the great God, who was, is and will be, but it can be taken as His revelation in a certain sense. **The *Father* rests in concealment, the *Son* is born to man out of his own soul. Thus mystic cognition is a real event in the cosmic process. It is the birth of an offspring of God. It is an event as real as any other natural event, only on a higher level.** This is the great secret of the mystic, that he himself creatively releases his divine offspring, but he also prepares himself beforehand to acknowledge this divine offspring created by himself. The non-mystic lacks the experience of the father of this offspring. For this father slumbers under a spell. **The offspring appears to be virginally born. The soul appears to have borne him without fructification. All its other offspring are conceived by the material world. In their case the father can be seen and touched. He has material life. The divine offspring alone is conceived of the eternal, hidden Father — God Himself.**

Greek Sages Before Plato In the Light of Mystery Wisdom

NUMEROUS FACTS lead us to perceive that **the philosophical wisdom of the Greeks stems from the same basic conviction as does mystical cognition.** We can understand the great philosophers only when we approach them with the feelings gained from observation of the Mysteries. **How reverently Plato speaks of the “secret teachings”** in the *Phaedo*: “And it appears that those men who established the Mysteries were not unenlightened, but in reality had a hidden meaning when they said long ago that whoever goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. For as they say in the Mysteries, ‘the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the mystics few;’ and these mystics are, I believe, those who have been true philosophers. And I in my life have, so far as I could, left nothing undone, and have striven in every way to make myself one of them.” (see Note 10) — Initiation can be discussed in this way only by someone who has **placed his own striving for wisdom entirely at the service of the conviction engendered by initiation.** And there is no doubt that a bright light is cast upon the words of the great Greek philosophers when they are illuminated by the Mysteries.

A saying which has been handed down about Heraclitus of Ephesus (535–475 B.C.) gives a clear indication of his relationship to the essence of the Mysteries, saying that his thoughts are “a path which is difficult to travel,” that anyone who approaches them uninitiated will find only “obscurity and darkness,” but that on the other hand they are “brighter than sunlight” for the person who is introduced to them by a mystic. (see Note 11) When it is said of his book that he placed the latter in the temple of Artemis, (see Note 12) this means that he could be understood only by initiates. (Historical evidence of Heraclitus' relationship to the Mysteries has already been contributed by Edmund Pfeleiderer. See his book, *Die Philosophie des Heraklit von Ephesus im Lichte der Mysterienidee*, Berlin 1886.) **Heraclitus was called “The Obscure” because only the light of the Mysteries provided the key to his conceptions.**

Heraclitus strikes us as a personality with the most serious attitude toward life. If we know how to conjure up his appearance, we see in his physiognomy that **he bore within him the most intimate experiences of cognition which he knew could only be indicated, not expressed, by words.** From the soil of such a conviction sprang **his famous saying, “Everything is in a state of flux,”** which Plutarch interprets in the following words: “It is impossible to step twice in the same river nor is it possible to lay hold twice of any mortal substance in a permanent state, by the suddenness and swiftness of the change in it there comes dispersion and at another time, a gathering together; or rather, not at another time nor later, but at the same instant it both settles into its place and forsakes its place; it is coming and going.” (see Note 13) The man who thinks in this way has **seen through the nature of transitory things.** He has felt urged to characterize in the sharpest words the essence of transitoriness. Such a characterization cannot be made unless **the transitory is measured against the eternal.** In particular this

characterization cannot be extended to man unless his innermost being has been penetrated. Heraclitus does extend this characterization to man: "Living and dead are the same and so are waking and sleeping, youth and age. For the one in changing becomes the other, and the other, changing, again becomes the one." (see Note 14) Full cognition of the illusory character of the lower personality is expressed in this sentence. He speaks of this even more forcibly: "There is life and death in our life, just as in our death." What does this mean except that life can be valued more highly than death only when seen from the point of view of the transitory. Death is decay to make room for new life, but the eternal lives in the new life as in the old. **The same eternal appears in transitory life as in death. When man has grasped this eternal he looks upon death with the same feelings as he looks upon life.** Only if he is unable to awaken this eternal within himself does life have a special value for him.

This is a distinguishing mark of NDE, and also ASP to the degree that the experiencer has worked past the horror of being awake during physical sleep. It seems to me, for instance, that I have actually passed the gates of death a number of times. Though the sting of death may not be completely neutralized thereby, it has become difficult for me to embrace ambitions attached exclusively to material existence. I am happy to work daily for basic sustenance of myself and dependents. But that will never motivate economic success as measured by this world. If stewardship of wealth were handed to me, it would always seem more burden than blessing.

The sentence, "Everything is in a state of flux" may be trotted out a thousand times, but if it is not spoken with a feeling for this content it is void of meaning.

Cognition of eternal creation is valueless if it does not cancel out our dependence upon earthly creation. Heraclitus means to repudiate the lust for life which presses after transitory things with the saying, "How shall we say of our daily life: 'we are,' when we know that from the standpoint of the eternal: 'we are and we are not.'" (Heraclitus, Fragment No. 81) (see Note 15) "But **Hades is the same as Dionysus,**" states another of the Fragments of Heraclitus. (see Note 16) **Dionysus, the god of lust for life,** of germination and growth, to whom the Dionysian festivals were dedicated, is for Heraclitus **the same as Hades, the god of annihilation and destruction.** Only one who sees life within death and death within life, and in both the eternal which is infinitely above life and death, his gaze alone **can behold in the right light the disadvantages and advantages of existence.** Then the disadvantages find their justification, for the eternal lives in them also. **What they appear to be from the standpoint of the limited lower life is only illusory:** "For men to get all they wish is not the better thing. It is disease that makes health a pleasant thing; evil, good; hunger, surfeit; and toil, rest." "Sea water is the most pure and the most polluted; for fishes it is drinkable and salutary, but for men it is undrinkable and deleterious." (see Note 17) **Heraclitus intends primarily to point out** not the transitory quality of earthly things, but the **splendor**

and majesty of the eternal. — Heraclitus spoke vigorously against Homer, Hesiod and the scholars of his day. He wished to point out the manner of their thought which clings only to the transitory. **He did not want the gods furnished with attributes taken from the transitory world. And he could not respect as the highest a science which investigated the laws of the growth and decay of things.** — For him the eternal speaks through the transitory. He has a deeply significant symbol for this eternal: “The harmony of the world is of opposite tensions, as is that of the lyre or bow.” (see Note 18) How much is contained in this pictured Unity is attained by the striving of forces in opposite directions and the harmonization of these diverging forces. One tone contradicts another, yet together they achieve harmony. If we apply this to the spiritual world we have the thought of Heraclitus: “Immortals take on mortality, mortals immortality; death is the eternal life of mortals, earthly life the death of immortals.” (see Note 19)

To cling to the transitory with his cognition is the original fault of man. Thereby he turns away from the eternal. Through this, [material] life becomes a danger to him. What [finally] happens to him comes to pass through life. **But [death] loses its sting when he no longer values [physical] life as absolute.** Then his innocence is restored to him. It is as though he could return from the so-called seriousness of life to childhood. How much that is play to the child is taken in all seriousness by the adult! **The one who knows [spiritually], however, becomes like a child. “Serious” values lose their worth when seen from the standpoint of the eternal.** Life then appears as a game. Therefore Heraclitus says, “Eternity is a child at play; it is the dominion of a child.” (see Note 20) **Where does the original fault lie? It consists in taking with the utmost seriousness those things to which this seriousness should not be attached. God has descended into the world of things. Whoever receives these things without [acknowledging] God receives them seriously as the “Tombs of God.”** He should play with them like a child and employ his seriousness [rather] to draw out of them the God who sleeps spellbound within.

This is the ‘original sin’ of mankind, as well as the primary fault of material scientism. To the “modern” Newtonian scientist, only matter is real and spirit is illusion, while the converse is actually true. Only spirit finally matters after all.

This was also one principle of Steiner's worldview prompting me to reinstate my Evangelical Christian allegiance, however much I may yet feel a stranger to it. There is no other philosophy --religious or scientific-- that will admit this fundamental truth. We are born sinners and therefore doomed to self-destruction, were it not for the Creator's self-sacrificial rescue of any death-borne willing to be reborn into Life.

Burning, yes, scorching is the effect which contemplation of the eternal has upon ordinary assumptions about things. **The spirit dissolves the thoughts of sensuality; it melts them. It is a consuming fire.** This is the higher sense of the

thought of Heraclitus, that fire is the archetypal substance of all things. Certainly this thought is to be taken first in the sense of an ordinary physical exploration of the phenomena of the world. But no one understands Heraclitus who does not think about him in the way that Philo, who lived at the time of the birth of Christianity, thought about the laws of the Bible. He says, "There are people who take written laws only as pictures of spiritual teaching. They search out the latter with great care and despise the former. I can only censure such people for they should take care of both: the cognition of the esoteric sense and the observation of the exoteric." (see Note 21) — **We pervert the thoughts of Heraclitus if we argue whether by his concept of fire he meant physical fire, or whether for him fire was only a symbol of the eternal spirit which dissolves and reforms material things. He meant both and neither, because for him the spirit also lived in ordinary fire.** The force physically active in fire lives on a higher plane in the human soul, melting sense-bound cognition in its furnace and allowing contemplation of the eternal to emerge from it.

Heraclitus in particular may easily be misunderstood. He allows strife to be the father of things, (see Note 22) but to him it is the father only of "things," not of the eternal. **If there were no polarities in the world, if the most manifold conflicting interests did not exist, the world of growth would not exist, nor would the world of decay.** What reveals itself, however, in this, what is diffused in it, is not strife; it is harmony. Just because strife is in all things, the spirit of the sage is to move over all things like fire, transforming them into harmony. This point throws light on one of the great thoughts of Heraclitean wisdom. What is the personal essence of man? The above passage contains the answer of Heraclitus. **Man is a mixture of conflicting elements, into which God is descended. This is the condition in which he finds himself. Further, he becomes aware of the spirit within him, the spirit which is rooted in the eternal.** This spirit, however, is born for him personally out of the conflict of the elements. This spirit should also pacify the elements. In man, nature creates beyond herself. It is the same unique force which has begotten the conflict, the mixture, which, filled with wisdom, is to remove this conflict again. There we have the eternal duality which lives in man, **the eternal contradiction in him between temporal and eternal.** Through the eternal he has become something quite definite, and out of this he should create something higher. He is both dependent and independent. He can participate in the eternal spirit which he beholds only to the extent of the mixture the eternal spirit has produced in him. Just because of this **he is called upon to form the eternal out of the temporal.** The spirit works in him. But it works in him in a special way. It works out of the temporal. **It is the peculiarity of the human soul that something temporal works like something eternal, that it leavens and strengthens like an eternal quality. This makes the human soul similar to a god and a worm at the same time. Because of this man stands midway between God and animal.** This leavening and strengthening force in him is his daemonic element. This is what strives beyond him from within. Heraclitus points to this in a striking way: "Man's daemon is his destiny." (see Note 23) (Daemon is meant here in the Greek sense. In the modern sense we would say spirit.) Thus for Heraclitus what lives in man

extends itself far beyond the personal. This personal element is the bearer of a daemonic element. This element is not confined to one personality and the death and birth of the personality have no significance for it. What connection has this daemonic element with what in the form of personality comes into existence and decays? **The [temporal personality] is only a form of appearance for the daemonic [eternal spirit].** The bearer of [spiritual] cognition looks forward and backward beyond himself. **That he experiences the daemonic element in himself is to him evidence of his own immortality.** Now he may no longer ascribe to this daemonic element the single task of filling out his personality. For the personality can be only one form of appearance of the daemonic element. **The daemon cannot confine itself within one personality. It has the force to animate many personalities. It can go from personality to personality.** This premise of Heraclitus gives rise as a matter of course to **the great thought of [spiritual] reincarnation.** Not, however, to the thought alone, but to the experience of reincarnation. The thought is only the preparation for the experience.

It took me awhile to recognize "the great thought" in Christian doctrine. We don't ascribe any truth to the eastern notions of reincarnation in lower animal forms ... Nor does Steiner. Even normal dream experience practices the innate understanding that one spirit manifests as multiple personalities, as does child's play or adult drama. Christian scripture teaches that my temporal personality is subject to final judgment of the Spirit, to be discarded into the fire of eternity when proven incapable of redemptive purpose –that is to deliver up incorruptible fruit. When this redemption is experienced before physical death, as a Christian awakening to the Spirit, one is re-christened to recognize the enduring (True) individuality, biblically as the "new name" inscribed on stone. From this was instituted the taking of Christian names for inscription upon a tombstone pending the redemption of all earthly personalities born of that spirit.

Whoever becomes aware of the daemonic element within himself does not discover it to be an innocent primary element. He finds that it [already] has characteristics. How has it come by these? **Why have I tendencies? Because other personalities have already worked upon my daemon.** And what will become of the effect which I [as a temporal personality] produce on the daemon, [assuming its task is not exhausted in my personality]? I prepare for a later personality. Something which is not the same as a divinity, something which reaches beyond me, introduces itself between me and the cosmic unity. My daemon introduces itself. As my today is but the result of yesterday, and my tomorrow will only be the result of my today, so my life is the continuation of another, and will be the basis for another. **As physical man looks backward on numerous yesterdays and forward to numerous tomorrows, so the soul of the sage beholds numerous lives in the past and numerous lives in the future.** What I acquired yesterday in the way of thoughts

and accomplishments, I use today. Is it not so with life? **Do not men set foot upon the horizon of existence with the most varied faculties? Whence comes this variety? Does it come out of nothingness?** — Our natural science congratulates itself on banishing the miracle from our conceptions of organic life. David Friedrich Strauss (see *Alter und Neuer Glaube, Old and New Faith*) considers it a great achievement of modern times that we no longer think of a perfect organic creature being miraculously created out of nothingness. We grasp perfection when we are able to explain it as an evolution out of imperfection. The structure of the ape is no longer a miracle if we may assume, as ancestors of the ape, primitive fish which have gradually transformed themselves. Let us agree to accept for the spirit what seems to us right with regard to nature. Is the perfected spirit to have the same origin as the imperfected spirit? Is Goethe to have the same disposition as any Hottentot? The spirit of Goethe cannot have the same spiritual predispositions as an aborigine, any more than a fish has the same predisposition as an ape. The spiritual ancestry of Goethe's spirit is different from that of the aborigine. **The spirit has grown like the body. The spirit in Goethe has more predecessors than that in the aborigine. Let us take the teaching of reincarnation in this sense.** Then we shall no longer find it “unscientific.” On the contrary, what is found in the soul will then be explained in the right way. What is given will not be accepted as a miracle. That I can write is the result of the fact that I have learned to do so. One who has never held a pen in his hand cannot sit down and write. But someone or other is supposed to have a “spark of genius” in some purely miraculous way. No, this “spark of genius” must also be acquired; it must be learned. If it makes its appearance in a personality, we call it a spiritual element. But first this spiritual element also had to learn; in an earlier life it has acquired for itself the “ability” it has in a later one.

In this way and no other did Heraclitus and the Greek sages conceive the thought of eternity. For them there was no question of the continuance of the actual personality. Let us refer to a saying of Empedocles (490–430 B.C.). Of those who regard something as a miracle, he says,

“Fools! for they have no far-reaching thoughts —
Who deem that what before was not comes into being,
Or that aught can perish and be utterly destroyed.
For it cannot be that aught can arise from what in no way is,
And it is impossible and unheard of that what is should perish;
For it will always be, wherever one may keep putting it.
A man wise in such matters would never surmise in his heart
That as long as mortals live what they call their life,
So long they are, and suffer good and ill;
While before they were formed and after they have been dissolved
They are just nothing at all.”
(see Note 24)

The Greek sage did not raise the question whether there is an eternal element in man; he only asked of what does this eternal consist and how can man cherish and care for it within himself. For It is the force which urges man to make himself ever more **it was clear to him from the beginning that man lives as a creature midway between the earthly and the divine. There was no question of the divine existing outside and beyond earthly things. The divine lives in man; it lives there, but in a human way.** and more divine. Only a person who thinks in this way can say with **Empedocles,**

**When, released from the body, you ascend to the free ether,
You will become an immortal god, escaping death. —**
(see Note 25)

What can happen to a human life from such a point of view? It can be initiated into the ordered cycle of the eternal. Forces must be present in it which are not brought into development by a purely natural life. And this life could pass by unused if these forces remained lying fallow. It was the task of the Mysteries to open them up, thereby likening the human to the divine. And the Greek sages also set themselves this task. Thus we understand **Plato's words: "Whoever goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods."** (see Note 26) Here we are dealing with an idea of immortality, the significance of which is determined within the whole cosmos. **Everything man undertakes in order to awaken the eternal within himself he does in order to heighten the existence-value of the cosmos.** As a cognizant being one is not an idle observer of the whole cosmos when he pictures to himself what would equally well be there without him. **His power of cognition is a higher natural creative force. What lights up in him spiritually is a divinity which was spellbound before, and which without his cognition would have to lie fallow and wait for another deliverer. Therefore the human personality does not live within itself and for itself; it lives for the cosmos.** Life extends far beyond individual existence when it is regarded in this way. Within the framework of such a conception we can understand sentences such as the following by Pindar, which gives us a glimpse of the eternal: "Happy is he who has seen those Mysteries ere he passes beneath the earth. He knows the truth about life's ending, and he knows that its first seeds were of God's giving." (see Note 27)

The proud physiognomy and solitary manner of **sages like Heraclitus** are understandable. They could say proudly of themselves that much was revealed to them, for they **did not ascribe their knowledge to their transitory personality at all, but to the eternal daemon within them.** Their pride was of necessity stamped with the attributes of humility and modesty, which are expressed in the words: All knowledge of transitory things is in eternal flux like these transitory things themselves. Heraclitus calls the eternal cosmos a game; he could also call it the most profoundly serious thing. But the word serious has become worn out through being applied to earthly experiences. The game of the eternal grants man a security in life of which he is deprived by the seriousness arising out of the transitory.

Another form of world-conception, different from that of Heraclitus, grew from the same foundation in the essence of the Mysteries, within a community founded by Pythagoras in lower Italy in the sixth century before Christ. The Pythagoreans saw the foundation of things in numbers and figures, whose laws they investigated mathematically. Aristotle says of them, "They were the first to advance the study of mathematics, and having been brought up in it they thought its principles were the principles of all things. Since of these principles numbers are by nature the first, and in numbers they seemed to see many resemblances to the things that exist and come into being — more than in fire and earth and water, such and such a modification of numbers being justice, another being soul and reason, another being opportunity — and similarly almost all other things being numerically expressible; since, again, they saw that the attributes and ratios of numerical scales were expressible in numbers; since, then, all other things seemed in their whole nature to be modeled after numbers, and numbers seemed to be the first things in the whole of nature, they supposed the demands of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number." (see Note 28)

The mathematical-scientific observation of natural phenomena must always lead to a kind of Pythagorean conception. If a string of definite length is struck, a certain tone is sent forth. If the string is shortened in definite numerical relationships, other tones come into being. The pitch of these tones can be expressed by numerical relationships. In physics color relationships also are expressed by numbers. When two bodies combine to form one substance this always occurs in such a way that of one substance one quite definite mass, expressible by number, combines with an appropriate one of the other substance. The Pythagoreans directed their observation upon such arrangements of measure and number in nature. Geometric figures also play a similar part in nature. For instance, astronomy is mathematics applied to the heavenly bodies. The point which became **important to the thinking life of the Pythagoreans is the fact that man discovers the laws of numbers and figures entirely by himself, through his spiritual activity alone**, and that when he looks out into nature the objects follow these laws he has established for himself in his soul. Man formulates for himself the concept of the ellipse; he establishes the laws of the ellipse. And the heavenly bodies move according to the laws he has established. (Of course we are not concerned here with the astronomical conceptions of the Pythagoreans. What could be said of them also applies to the Copernican conceptions in the connection under consideration here.) From this **it follows immediately that the functions of the human soul are not a force apart from the rest of the cosmos, but that these functions are the expression of a law-abiding pattern which is interwoven with the cosmos.** The Pythagorean said to himself: The senses show material phenomena to man. But they do not show the harmonious patterns which the objects obey. Rather, the spirit of man must first find these harmonious patterns within himself if he wishes to behold them outside in the cosmos. The deeper sense of the cosmos, that which reigns in it as eternal law-abiding necessity, becomes apparent as a present reality in the human soul. In the soul the meaning of the cosmos dawns.

This meaning does not lie in what is seen, heard and touched, but in what the soul brings forth from its deep recesses into the light of day. **The eternal pattern therefore lies hidden in the depths of the soul. Let us descend into the soul, and we shall find the eternal. God, the eternal cosmic harmony, is within the human soul. The soul is not confined to the physical body enclosed by man's skin. For in the soul are born the patterns according to which the worlds circle in space. The soul is not in the personality. The personality merely provides the organ through which what is interwoven with the cosmos can be expressed.**

Something of the spirit of Pythagoras is contained in the saying of the Church Father, Gregory of Nyssa: "It is said that human nature by itself is something small and limited, but the Godhead is infinite, and how has the infinite been embraced by something so tiny? And who says that the infinity of the Godhead was enclosed within the bounds of the flesh as in a vessel? For not even in our life is man's spiritual nature enclosed within the bounds of the flesh; on the contrary **the physical body is limited by neighboring parts, but the soul expands freely over the whole of creation by means of the activity of thought.**" (see Note 29) The soul is not the personality. The soul belongs to eternity. Taking this point of view, **the Pythagorean also had to admit that only "fools" could suppose the qualities of the soul to be exhausted with the personality.** — For them also **it depended upon the awakening of the eternal within the personal. To them cognition was communion with the eternal.** The more a man brought this eternal into existence within himself the higher they valued him. The life of their community consisted in fostering this communion with the eternal. In order to lead the members of the community to such communion, the Pythagorean education was established. This education, therefore, was a philosophical initiation. And the Pythagoreans could very well say that **by their mode of life they strove toward the same goal as the Mystery cults.**

Plato as a Mystic

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the Mysteries in the spiritual life of Greece can be seen in Plato's conception of the world. There is only one means of understanding him fully: he must be placed in the light which shines forth from the Mysteries. The later pupils of Plato, the Neoplatonists, attribute to him **a secret teaching, to which he admitted only those who were worthy**, and then strictly under the "seal of silence." His teaching was considered **secret in the same sense as the Mystery wisdom.** Even if Plato himself is not the author of the seventh Platonic Epistle, as some people assert, this makes no difference for our purpose; it need not concern us whether Plato or someone else expresses the attitude of mind contained in this letter. This attitude of mind was **inherent in his conception of the world.** It says in this Epistle: "But this much I can certainly declare concerning all these writers, or prospective writers who claim to know the subjects which I seriously study, whether as hearers of mine or of other teachers, or from their own discoveries; it is impossible, in my judgment at least, that these men understand anything about this subject. There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith, for it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as

a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.” (see Note 30) — These words could only indicate a powerlessness in the use of words due to personal weakness, if one could not find in them the sense contained in the Mysteries. What Plato never wrote and never intended to write about must be something that defies expression in writing. It must be a feeling, a sensation, an experience that cannot be conveyed in a moment, but is attained through “continued application ... and communion.” The intimate training Plato was able to give to the elect is indicated here. For them fire flashed forth from his words; for the others, only thoughts. — It is of great consequence how one approaches Plato's Dialogues. They mean more or less according to one's frame of mind. To Plato's pupils more than the mere literal sense of his expositions was conveyed. Where he taught, the participants experienced the atmosphere of the Mysteries. The words had overtones which vibrated with them. But these overtones needed the atmosphere of the Mysteries. Otherwise they died away unheard.

In the center of the world of Plato's Dialogues stands the personality of Socrates. We need not touch on the historical aspect here. What matters is the character of Socrates as represented by Plato. Socrates is a person sanctified through death for the cause of truth. **He died as only an initiate can die, one to whom death is but a moment of life like other moments.** He meets death as any other occurrence of earthly existence. His behavior was such that not even in his friends were the feelings usual to such an occasion aroused. Phaedo says in the Dialogue on the Immortality of the Soul: “For my part, I had strange emotions when I was there. For I was not filled with pity as I might naturally be when present at the death of a friend; since he seemed to me to be happy, both in his bearing and his words, he was meeting death so fearlessly and nobly. And so I thought that even in going to the abode of the dead he was not going without the protection of the gods, and that when he arrived there it would be well with him, if it ever was well with anyone. And for this reason I was not at all filled with pity, as might seem natural when I was present at a scene of mourning; nor on the other hand did I feel pleasure, as was our custom when we were occupied with philosophy — although our talk was of philosophy — but a very strange feeling came over me, an unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and of pain together, when I thought that Socrates was presently to die.” (see Note 31) **And the dying Socrates instructs his pupils about immortality.** His personality, knowing by experience the [relative] valuelessness of life, here acts as proof of a quality very different from all logic and intellectual reasoning. It is not as though a [mere] man were conversing — for this man is at the point of crossing the threshold of death — but **as though the eternal truth itself [were speaking]**, having made its abode in a transitory personality. Where the temporal dissolves into nothingness we seem to find the air in which the eternal can resound.

We hear no proofs of immortality in the logical sense. The whole dialogue is directed toward **leading the friends to the point where they can behold the eternal. Then they will need no proofs. Is one to prove that the rose is red to**

someone who sees it? Is one to prove that the spirit is eternal to someone whose eyes have been opened so that he can see this spirit? —

This is, I propose, the true significance of experiences like ASP --that each becomes convinced of the Eternal by virtue of direct acquaintance with death and consciousness beyond that threshold. And so, there is the double tragedy of the unbeliever for whom even experience cannot prove Truth, since consciousness is itself suspected of deception. Such one renders himself blind and deaf, despite having eyes and ears -- spirit or flesh-- just as Jesus himself observed of his own critics. Therefore, for any so willing, ASP is practice for the Awakening we call dying, and to a lesser degree also is sleep and dreaming.

Socrates [prescribes] living experiences. First of all it is a meeting with wisdom itself [*Herself?*]. What is **the aim of the person who pursues wisdom**? He wishes **to free himself from all that his senses offer** him in everyday observation. He wishes **to seek the spirit in the material world**. Is not this a fact which **can be compared to dying**? “Other people” — this is Socrates' opinion — “are likely not to be aware that those who pursue philosophy aright study nothing but dying and being dead. Now if this is true, it would be absurd to be eager for nothing but this all their lives, and then to be reluctant when that came for which they had been eagerly practicing all along.” (see Note 32) To reinforce this, Socrates asks one of his friends, “Do you think a philosopher would be likely to care much about the so-called pleasures, such as eating or drinking? ... Or about the pleasures of sexual desire? ... Do you believe such a man would think much of the other cares of the body — I mean such as the possession of fine clothes and shoes and the other personal adornments? Do you think he would care about them or despise them, except so far as it is necessary to have them? ... Altogether, then, you think that such a man would not devote himself to the body, but would, so far as he was able, turn away from the body and concern himself with the soul? ... To begin with, then, it is clear that in such matters **the philosopher, more than other men, separates the soul from association with the body**” (see Note 33) After this Socrates is entitled to say: Striving for wisdom is comparable to dying, in that man turns from physical things. But where does he turn? He turns to the spiritual. However, can he expect the same of the spirit as of his senses? Socrates explains himself on this: “Now, how about the acquisition of intelligent insight? Is the body a hindrance or not, if it is made to share in the search for wisdom? What I mean is this: Have the sight and hearing of men any truth in them, or is it true, as the poets are always telling us, that we neither hear nor see accurately? ... Then, when does the soul attain to truth? For when it tries to consider anything in company with the body, it is evidently deceived by it.” All that we perceive with (see Note 34) the physical senses comes into existence and dies away. And this coming into existence and dying away is the cause of our being deceived. But if we examine objects more thoroughly with intelligent insight, then we partake of the eternal in them. But **the physical senses do not convey to us the eternal in its true form. They deceive us**

when we rely implicitly upon them. They cease to deceive us if we confront them with logical insight, making everything conveyed by the senses subject to examination by this insight. But if logical insight is to judge the statements of the senses, must not something live within this insight which transcends the perceptions of the senses? Hence what is true and false in objects is judged by something in us which opposes the material body, and therefore is not subject to its laws. **Above all, this [insight] must not be subject to the laws of growth and decay, for it bears truth within itself.**

Herein lies the argument for regarding consciousness, being direct cognition of the truth or deception of the senses, as its own proof of one's eternal soul and cosmic judgment.

Truth cannot have a yesterday and a tomorrow; it cannot be this on one occasion and that on another, as material things are. Hence truth in itself must be eternal. **As the philosopher turns away from the transitory material world, and turns to truth, he approaches an eternal element, dwelling within him. If we immerse ourselves wholly in the spirit, then we live entirely in truth. The material world around us is no longer present in its material form only.** “Would not that man,” asks Socrates, “do this most perfectly who approaches each thing, so far as possible, with the reason alone, not introducing sight into his reasoning nor dragging in any of the other senses along with his thinking, but who employs pure, absolute reason in his attempt to search out the pure, absolute essence of things, and who removes himself, so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body because he feels that its companionship disturbs the soul and hinders it from attaining truth and wisdom? ... Well, then, this that we call death, is it not a release and separation from the body? But, as we hold, **[it is only the true philosophers who continue most eagerly] to release the soul, and just this — the release and separation of the soul from the body — is their study** ... Then, as I said in the beginning, it would be absurd if a man who had been all his life fitting himself to live as nearly in a state of death as he could, should then be disturbed when death came to him ... In fact, then, the true philosophers practice dying, and death is less terrible to them than to any other men.” (see Note 35) **Socrates also bases all higher morality on the liberation of the soul from the body.** One who obeys only the demands of his body is not moral. Who has courage? asks Socrates. He has courage who not only disregards his body but follows the demands of his spirit when this endangers his body. And who is self-restrained? He who is “not excited by the passions and in being superior to them acts in a seemly way. Is self-restraint therefore not a characteristic of those alone who despise the body and pass their lives in philosophy?” (see Note 36) And thus it is with all virtues, according to Socrates.

Socrates proceeds to characterize intelligent insight itself. **What does cognition really mean?** Doubtless we attain cognition through forming judgments. Very well, I form a judgment about something; for instance, I say to myself, This thing that stands before me is a tree. How do I arrive at such a statement? I shall be able to do

so only if I already know what a tree is. I must remember my idea of a tree. A tree is a material thing. If I remember a tree, I remember a material object. I say that a thing is a tree if it reminds me of other things I have perceived before, and which I know to be trees. Memory enables me to reach cognition. Through memory I can compare the various material things with each other. But in this my cognition is not exhausted. If I see two similar things I form the judgment, These things are similar. But in reality two things are never completely similar. Wherever I find similarity it is only relative. Therefore I think of similarity without finding it in material reality. The thought of similarity helps me toward judgment, as memory helps me toward judgment and cognition. Just as I remember trees when I see a tree, so I remember the thought of similarity when I see two similar things. Therefore **thoughts arise within me [much like memories] which are not gained from material reality. All cognition not derived from [material] reality is based on such thoughts. The whole of mathematics consists only of such thoughts.** It would be a poor geometrician who could relate mathematically only what he sees with his eyes and grasps with his hands. It follows that **we have thoughts which do not stem from transitory nature, but which arise from the spirit. And precisely these thoughts bear the stamp of eternal truth upon them. What mathematics teaches will be eternally true, even if the whole universe were to collapse tomorrow, and a totally new one arise.** The present mathematical truths might not be applicable to the conditions prevailing in a new universe, nevertheless they would remain true in themselves. **Only when the soul is alone with itself can it bring forth such eternal truths out of itself. The soul therefore is related to truth, to the eternal, and not to the transitory, the seemingly real.**

Wow! There is no better description --being utterly alone with oneself-- expressing the crisis, the horror and the import of awareness while physically asleep.

For this reason Socrates says, **“When the soul reflects alone by itself, it departs into the realm of the pure, the everlasting, the immortal and the changeless, and being akin to these, it dwells always with them whenever it is by itself and is not hindered,** and it has rest from its wanderings and remains always the same and unchanging with the changeless, since it is in communion therewith. And **this state of the soul is called wisdom ...** Then see, if this is not the conclusion from all that we have said, that the soul is most like the divine and immortal and intellectual and uniform and indissoluble and ever unchanging, and the body, on the contrary, most like the human and mortal and multiform and unintellectual and dissoluble and ever-changing ... Then if it is in such a condition, the soul goes away into what is like itself, into the invisible, divine, immortal and wise, and when it arrives there it is happy, freed from error, folly, fear, fierce loves and all the other human ills and, as the initiated say, lives in truth through all after-time with the gods.” (see Note 37) Here we cannot undertake to show all the paths along which Socrates guides his friends to the eternal. All these paths breathe the same spirit. All are intended to show that **man finds one thing when he follows the paths of transitory sense perception, and another when his spirit is alone with itself.**

Socrates points to the archetypal nature of the spirit for those who listen to him. If they find it they can see with spiritual eyes that it is eternal. The dying Socrates does not prove immortality: he simply demonstrates the essence of the soul. It then becomes evident that growth and decay, birth and death have nothing to do with this soul. **The essence of the soul lies in truth, but truth itself cannot grow and decay.** The soul has as much to do with growth as the crooked has to do with the straight. Death, however, belongs to this process of “growth.” **Therefore the soul has nothing to do with death.** Must we not say that the immortal assumes mortality as little as the straight assumes crookedness. Continuing from this, Socrates says, “If the immortal is also imperishable, it is impossible for the soul to perish when death comes to meet it. For, as our argument has shown, it will not admit death and will not be dead, just as the number three, we said, will never be even.” (see Note 38)

Let us trace the whole development of this dialogue, in which **Socrates leads his listeners to the point where they are able to see the eternal in the human personality.** The listeners absorb his thoughts; they search within themselves for something in their own inner experiences through which they can say “yes” to his ideas. They put forward the objections that spring to their minds. What has happened to the listeners when the dialogue has reached its end? They have found something in themselves which they did not possess before. **They have not merely absorbed an abstract truth; they have gone through a process of development. Something has come to life within them which was not alive in them before. Is not this comparable to an initiation?** Does not this throw light on the reason why Plato expressed his philosophy in the form of dialogue? These dialogues are intended to be nothing but a literary form of the proceedings in the Mystery places. What Plato himself says at various points convinces us of this. **As a teacher of philosophy, Plato wanted, insofar as possible through this medium, to be what the initiator was in the Mysteries.** Well does Plato know himself to be at one with the methods of the Mysteries! He considers his method to be the right one only if it leads to the place to which the mystic should be led! He expresses this in the *Timaeus*: “All men who possess even a small share of good sense call upon God always at the outset of every undertaking, be it small or great: we therefore who are purposing to deliver a discourse concerning the Universe, how far it is created or is uncreated, must needs invoke gods and goddesses (if so be that we are not utterly demented), praying that all we say may be approved by them in the first place, and secondly by ourselves.” (see Note 39) And to those who seek along such a path, **Plato promises “that the Godhead, as Savior, makes it possible that such a distant and difficult investigation — one so prone to error — can be accomplished** through an enlightened philosophy.” (see Note 40)

The *Timaeus* in particular reveals to us **the relationship of Plato's world conception with the Mysteries.** At the very beginning of this dialogue, reference is made to an “initiation.” Solon is “initiated” into the creation of worlds by an Egyptian priest, and also into the manner in which myths that have been handed down, express eternal truths in picture form. “There have been and there will be

many and divers destructions of mankind,” (thus the Egyptian priest instructs Solon) “of which the greatest are by fire and water, and lesser ones by countless other means. For in truth the story that is told in your country as well as in ours, how once upon a time Phaethon, son of Helios, yoked his father's chariot, and, because he was unable to drive it along the course taken by his father, burnt up all that was upon the earth and himself perished by a thunderbolt -that story, as it is told, has the fashion of a legend, but the truth of it lies in the occurrence of a shifting of the bodies in the heavens which move round the earth, and a destruction of the things on the earth by fierce fire, which recurs at long intervals.” (see Note 41) — This point in the *Timaeus* clearly refers to **the relationship between the initiate and the myths of the people. He perceives the truths hidden in their pictures.**

The drama of the world's creation is presented in the *Timaeus*. Whoever wishes to retrace the paths leading to this creation comes to the point of divining the archetypal force from which everything has sprung. “Now to discover the Maker and Father of this Universe were a task indeed; and having discovered Him, to declare Him unto all men were a thing impossible.” (see Note 42) The mystic knew what was meant by this “thing impossible.” It indicates the drama of God. **God is not present for him in the materially comprehensible world. There He is present as nature. [But] He lies spell-bound in nature.** According to the ancient mystics, only he can approach Him who awakens the divine within himself. Therefore **He cannot so easily be made comprehensible to everyone. He does not appear in person, even to those who approach Him.** This is what the *Timaeus* says. The Father has created the world out of the cosmic body and the cosmic soul. **In perfect proportions He has united harmoniously the elements which came into being when He offered His own, separate existence by diffusing Himself. Thus the body of the world came into existence. On this body of the world, the soul of the world is stretched in the form of a cross.** (see Note 43) **This soul is the divine element in the world. It has met with death on the cross in order that the world may exist.** Plato is able to call nature the tomb of the divine element. (see Note 44) This is not a tomb containing something dead, but something eternal, for which death only gives the opportunity to express the omnipotence of life. **Man sees this nature in the right light when he approaches it in order to deliver the crucified soul of the world. It must be raised from death, the spell must be lifted from it. Where can it come to life again? Only in the soul of the man who is initiated.** In this way wisdom finds its right relationship to the cosmos. **The resurrection, the deliverance of the Godhead: this is cognition [knowledge of the divine wisdom].** The evolution of the world from the least to the most perfect is traced in the *Timaeus*. An ascending process is represented. The beings develop. God reveals Himself in this development. The process of creation is a resurrection of God from the tomb. Man makes his appearance in this stream of evolution. **Plato shows that with man something special has arrived.** True, the whole world is divine. And **man is no more divine than the other beings. But in the other beings God is concealed, and in man He is manifest.** The end of the *Timaeus* reads: “And now at length we may say that our

discourse concerning the Universe has reached its termination. For this our Cosmos has received the living creatures both mortal and immortal and been thereby fulfilled; it being itself a visible Living Creature embracing the visible creatures, a perceptible God made in the image of the Intelligible, most great and good and fair and perfect in its creation — even this one and only begotten world.” (see Note 45)

But this one and only begotten world would be incomplete if it did not have among its images the image of the Creator Himself. Only out of the soul of man can this image be born. It is not the Father Himself who can be born of man, but the Son, the offspring of God living in the soul, who is like unto the Father.

Philo of whom it was said that he was Plato reborn, **called the wisdom born of man, the “Son of God;”** (see Note 46) this wisdom lives in the soul and contains the intelligence that exists in the world. **This world-intelligence, the Logos, appears as the book in which “has been inscribed and engraved the formation of the world.”** (see Note 47) **Further it appears as the Son of God**, who “followed the ways of his Father, and shaped the different kinds, looking to the archetypal patterns which that Father supplied.” (see Note 48) In the manner of Plato, **Philo speaks of this Logos as the Christ:** “For since God is the first and sole King of the universe, the road leading to Him, being a king's road, is rightly called royal. This road you must take to be philosophy ... the philosophy which the ancient circle of ascetics pursued in hard-fought contest, eschewing the soft enchantments of pleasure, engaged with a fine severity in the study of what is good and fair. This royal road then, which we have just said to be **true and genuine philosophy**, is called in **the Law, the utterance and word of God.**” (see Note 49)

Philo experiences this as an initiation when he sets forth on the path to meet the Logos who is, for him, the Son of God. “I feel no shame in recording my own experience, a thing I know from its having **happened to me a thousand times**. On some occasions, after making up my mind to follow the usual course of writing on philosophical tenets, and knowing definitely the substance of what I was to set down, I have found my understanding incapable of giving birth to a single idea, and have given up without accomplishing anything, reviling my understanding for its self-conceit, and filled with amazement at the might of Him Who is, to Whom is due the opening and closing of the womb of the soul. On other occasions, I have approached my work empty and suddenly become full, the **ideas falling in a shower from above** and being sown invisibly, so that under the influence of the divine possession I have been **filled with corybantic frenzy and been unconscious of anything**, place, persons present, myself, words spoken, lines written. For **I obtained language, ideas, an enjoyment of light, keenest vision, pellucid distinctness of objects, such as might be received through the inner eye as the result of clearest cognition.**” (see Note 50)

Another wow! When ASP gives way to a new out-of-body lucidity, when the Light comes on, the fear also yields to an ecstasy of peace and

understanding and security of being that is truly indescribable to any who have not also been there.

- This is the description of a path to cognition which is so arranged that **whoever takes this path is conscious that he becomes one with the divine when the Logos comes to life within him.** This is clearly expressed in the words: “When the mind is mastered by the love of the divine, when it strains its powers to reach the inmost shrine, when it puts forth every effort and ardor on its forward march, under the divine impelling force it forgets all else, forgets itself and fixes its thoughts and memories on Him alone Whose attendant and servant it is, to Whom it dedicates incense, the incense of consecrated virtues.” (see Note 51) — For Philo there are only two paths. **Either man can pursue the material world which is offered by perception and intellect, but then he is limited to his own personality, he withdraws from the cosmos; or he can become conscious of the all-embracing cosmic powers, experiencing the eternal within his personality.** “One who runs away from God takes refuge in himself. There are two minds, that of the universe, which is God, and the individual mind. **One who flees from his own mind flees for refuge to the Mind of all things.** For one who abandons his own mind acknowledges all that makes the human mind its standard to be naught, and he refers all things to God. **On the other hand, one who runs away from God declares Him to be the cause of nothing, and himself to be the cause of all things that come into being.**” (see Note 52)

And the one who declares his own 'I am' to be a mere illusion of electrochemical interactions? He also refuses to answer the persistent knock of God's true Son and Self seeking rebirth in his soul; for to him even the Father and Creator of all is only his own fancy, a creation of the chance collision of molecules ... That is to say 'nothing'.

Plato's world-conception aims to be a form of cognition which in its whole nature is religion. It brings cognition into relationship with the highest man can reach through his feelings. Plato allows cognition to be valid only when it completely satisfies man's feelings. **Then it is not pictorial knowledge; it is the content of life. It is a higher man in man. The personality is but an image of this higher man.** In man himself the superior, the archetypal man is born. And with this another secret of the Mysteries is expressed in Plato's philosophy. The Church Father Hippolytus points to this secret: “This is the great and ineffable mystery of the Samothracians (the guardians of a particular Mystery-cult) which it is permissible only for the initiated to know. For the Samothracians expressly hand down, in the Mysteries that are celebrated among them, that Adam is the archetypal man.” (see Note 53)

Plato's “dialogue on love,” **the Symposium**, also describes an “initiation.” **Here love appears as the herald of wisdom.** If wisdom, the Eternal Word (Logos), is

the Son of the Eternal Creator of the world, then love has a maternal relationship with this Logos. Before it is possible for even a spark of the light of wisdom to light up in the human soul, there must be **an unconscious longing, which draws the soul toward the divine**. Man must be drawn unconsciously toward that which, when raised into consciousness, subsequently brings him supreme joy. What Heraclitus designates as the daemon (See Note in Chapter 3) in man is united with the idea of love. — In the Symposium men of the most varied status, possessing the most varied views on life, speak of love; the man in the street, the politician, the scientist, the poet of comedy, Aristophanes and the serious poet, Agathon. Each has his conception of love according to how he experiences life. How they express themselves reveals the stage at which their “daemon” stands (See Note in Chapter 3). Through love one being is drawn to another. **The manifold variety of things into which the divine unity is diffused strives through love toward oneness and harmony. Love therefore has a divine quality. Hence each man is capable of understanding it only insofar as he has partaken of this divine quality.** After these men, representing varying stages of maturity, have declared their views on love, Socrates takes up the discussion. He considers love from the viewpoint of a thinker capable of [spiritual] cognition. For him **love is not a god. But it is something leading man to God**. Eros, love, is no god for him. God is perfect, and therefore possesses beauty and goodness. But **Eros is only the longing for beauty and goodness. Therefore he stands between man and God. He is a “daemon,” a mediator between the earthly and the divine.** — It is significant that Socrates does not pretend to give his thoughts when he speaks about love. He says he is only recounting a revelation about it, which a woman gave him. He has conceived an idea of love's nature through mantic art. (See Author's Comments) The priestess Diotima awakened in Socrates the daemoniac force which was to lead him to the divine. She “initiated” him. — This passage in the Symposium is most revealing. We must ask, Who is this “wise woman” who awakens the daemon in Socrates? We should not think of mere poetic fantasy here. No actual wise woman could have awakened the daemon in the soul if the force for this awakening were not within the soul itself. We must seek this “wise woman” in the soul of Socrates himself. There must, however, be **a basis which allows what brings the daemon to birth in the soul to appear as a being in external reality**. This force cannot work in the same way as the forces we can observe in the soul as belonging to it and at home with it. We see that it is **the force of the soul before it has received wisdom, which Socrates represents as the “wise woman.” It is the maternal principle which gives birth to the Son of God, Wisdom, the Logos**. The unconscious force of the soul is presented as a feminine element, which allows the divine to enter consciousness. The soul which as yet lacks wisdom is the mother of what leads to the divine. This leads us to **an important idea of mysticism. The soul is recognized as the mother of the divine. With the inevitability of a natural force it unconsciously leads man toward the divine.** — This point throws light on the conception held in the Mysteries regarding Greek mythology. The world of the gods is born in the soul. **Man regards as his gods what he himself creates** in the form of pictures (see Note in Chapter 2). But he must progress to another idea. **He must [also] transform into pictures of the gods the divine force present in**

himself which is active before the creation of these pictures of the gods. **The mother of the divine** appears behind the divine, and this **is none other than the original force in the human soul**. Man places goddesses beside his gods. Let us look at the **myth of Dionysus** in the light of the above. Dionysus is the son of Zeus and a mortal mother, Semele. Zeus tears the premature infant from the mother as she lies slain by lightning, keeping him in his own thigh until he is mature. Hera, the mother of the gods, stirs up the Titans against Dionysus. They dismember the boy. But Pallas Athene rescues the still beating heart and brings it to Zeus. Thereupon Zeus begets the son for the second time. **In this myth we have an exact description of a process which takes place in the depths of the human soul**. Whoever wishes to speak in the sense of the Egyptian priest who instructs Solon about the nature of a myth could speak as follows: What you tell us, that Dionysus, the son of a god and a mortal mother, is dismembered and is born again, may sound like a fable, but what is true about it is the birth of the divine and its destiny in the human soul. The divine unites with the temporal-earthly soul of man. As soon as this divine element, Dionysus, comes to life, the soul experiences a great longing for its true spiritual status. The consciousness which once again appears in the image of a female divinity, Hera, is jealous of the birth out of a better consciousness. It stirs up the lower nature of man — the Titans. **The child of god, still immature, is dismembered. It is present in man as a dismembered material-intellectual science**. But if in man sufficient higher wisdom (Zeus) is at work, it cherishes and cares for the immature child, which then is born again as the second son of god (Dionysus). Thus **out of science, out of the dismembered divine force in man, is born the harmonizing wisdom, which is the Logos, the son of God and of a mortal mother, who is the transitory soul of man striving unconsciously for the divine**. We are far from the spiritual reality represented in all this as long as we see in it only a mere process of the soul and take it as a picture of this process. **In this spiritual reality the soul does not merely experience something within itself; it is completely disconnected from itself and participates in a cosmic process which in truth takes place outside itself and not within it**.

Platonic wisdom and Greek mythology unite; so, equally, do Mystery wisdom and mythology. The gods that they created were the objects of the religion of the people; the history of their coming into existence was the secret of the Mysteries. No wonder **that it was accounted dangerous to “betray” the Mysteries**. This meant **“betraying” the origin of the gods of the people**. And **the right understanding of this origin is wholesome; misunderstanding is destructive**.

Mystery Wisdom and Myth

THE MYSTIC SOUGHT within himself for forces, for beings which remain unknown to man so long as he is limited by the ordinary conception of life. The mystic formulates the great question about his own spiritual forces, which go beyond lower nature, and their laws. **With his ordinary materialistic, logical**

conception of life, man creates [natural] gods for himself, or if he gains insight into this creation he disowns them. The mystic perceives that [people create] gods; he perceives why he creates them; **[the mystic] can, so to speak, see beyond the natural laws of the creation of gods.** It is the same with him as it would be with a plant if it suddenly acquired knowledge and learned to know the laws governing its own growth and development. The plant develops in innocent unconsciousness. If it knew its own laws it would have to acquire an entirely new relationship to itself. The plant which has acquired knowledge would have before it as an ideal what the poet experiences when he sings about it, what the botanist thinks when he investigates its laws. — **The same is true of the mystic with respect to [laws and forces] working within him.** As one who knows, he must create beyond himself a divine element. This was the attitude of the initiates toward what the people had created beyond nature. This was their attitude toward the popular world of gods and myths. **They wished to perceive the [supernatural laws concealed by] this world of gods and myths. Where the people had a divinity, a myth, there [the initiates] sought a higher truth.** — Let us consider an **example:** The Athenians were compelled by the **Cretan King Minos** to deliver to him seven boys and seven girls every eight years. These were thrown as food to **the Minotaur**, a fearful monster. When for the third time the sad consignment was to leave for Crete, the king's son, Theseus, traveled with them. When he arrived in Crete, King Minos' own daughter, Ariadne, [sided with him]. The Minotaur lived in a labyrinth, a maze from which, once one had wandered into it, he could not find his way out again. Theseus wished to free his homeland from the disgraceful tribute. He had to enter the labyrinth, into which the monster's prey was usually thrown. He wished to slay the Minotaur. He undertook this task; he overcame the fearful foe and again reached freedom with the aid of a ball of thread which Ariadne had given him. — **The mystic had to recognize how the creative spirit of man comes [subconsciously] to form such a tale.** As the botanist contemplates the growth of a plant to discover its laws, so the mystic wished to contemplate the creating spirit. He sought truth, wisdom, where the people had set up a myth. **Sallustius discloses the attitude of a mystic-sage toward such a myth: “The universe itself can be called a myth, since bodies and material objects are apparent in it, while souls and minds are concealed.** Furthermore, to wish to teach all men the truth about the gods causes the foolish to despise, because they cannot learn, and the good to be slothful, whereas **to conceal the truth by myths prevents the [foolish] from despising philosophy and compels the [good] to study it.”** (see Note 54)

This discussion won my attention immediately, as it clearly echoes Jesus in his defense of the use of parable to nurture seeking spirits of people while confounding their self-seeking religious leaders, who "having ears could not hear, and having eyes, yet could not see." He was thereby able to awaken willing spiritual eyes and ears from among untrained followers, calling out initiates from the unordained. This infuriated the ruling priesthood, of course. Jesus method was not

intended to obscure the truth, but rather to awake a desire for it. So when a disciple would ask the meaning of his mythologizing, Jesus was only too glad to provide the cognitive explanation. And so in a few years time, coarse fisherman and common laborers would achieve a level of spiritual experience and understanding outshining their contemporary religious teachers and scribes.

The mystic was conscious that by **seeking the truth contained in a myth**, he was adding something to what was present in the consciousness of the people. It was clear to him that he was placing himself above this consciousness of the people just as a botanist places himself above the growing plant. He said something quite different from what was present in the mythological consciousness, but he looked upon what he said as a deeper truth which was symbolically expressed in the myth. **Man confronts the material world as if it were a monstrous enemy. To it he sacrifices the fruits of his personality. It devours them. It does so until the conqueror (Theseus) awakens in man. His [spiritual knowledge] spins for him the thread by which he finds his way when he enters the maze of the material world to slay his foe.**

So when the most progressive scientific minds bravely conclude that all spirit is illusion and consciousness but a construct of physio-chemical processes, this represents the ultimate sacrifice to the material beast. Thus he disowns the very 'I am', that divine element of his own self. However, when ASP then awakens me to face myself as a bodiless spirit, I begin to long (at the least) for a way out of physical entrapment, spellbound in paralysis. Then when release happens, however on the 'wrong side' of reality as a "false awakening" or 'lucid dream', so one may feel deceived ... or liberated, depending on one's spiritual outlook. Even the strictest positivist among ASP sufferers expresses this much, that he or she wishes to believe that spirit is real and independent of matter. Ironically, it was the material appearances labeled as 'myth' by the original philosophers. And it was from their allegiance to concealed spiritual truth that modern scientific method was born --the quest for material 'fact'.

The mystery of human cognition itself is expressed in this conquering of the material world. The mystic knows this mystery. It indicates a force in the human personality. Ordinary consciousness is unaware of this force. But [this creative force] works within it nevertheless. It engenders the myth which has the same structure as the mystical truth. This truth is symbolized in the myth. — **What then are myths? They are a creation of the spirit, of the unconsciously creative soul. The soul is governed by entirely definite laws. It must work in a definite direction in order to create beyond itself. On the mythological level it does this**

in pictures, but these pictures are built up according to the laws of the soul. We could also say that when the soul progresses beyond the plane of mythological consciousness to the deeper truths, these bear the same stamp as the myths did before, because one and the same force is active in their creation. The Neoplatonic philosopher, Plotinus (204–269 A. D.), referring to the Egyptian priest-sages, speaks thus about this **relationship between the way of thinking common to pictorial myths and higher cognition:**

“The wise of Egypt — whether in precise knowledge or by a prompting of nature — indicated the truth where, in their effort toward philosophical statement, they left aside the writing, forms that take in the details of words and sentences — those characters that represent sounds and convey the propositions of reasoning — and **drew pictures** instead, engraving in the temple-inscriptions a separate image for every separate item: thus they exhibited the thought-content in which the Supreme goes forth. For **each manifestation of knowledge and wisdom is a distinct image, an object in itself, an immediate unity, not an aggregate of discursive argument and detailed discussion.** Later from this wisdom in unity there appears, in another form of existence, an image, already less compact, which announces the original in an outward stage and seeks the causes by which things are such that **the wonder arises how a created world can be so excellent.**” (see Note 55)

Whoever wishes to become acquainted with the relationship between mysticism and mythological tales, must see how mythology is dealt with by the world conception of those whose wisdom accords with the method of thinking of the Mysteries. Such accord exists to the fullest extent in **Plato. His interpretation of myths and his use of them in his exposition, may be taken as a standard.** (see Note in Chapter 4) In the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue about the soul, the myth of Boreas is introduced. This divine being, which was seen in the rushing wind, once glimpsed the beautiful Orithea, daughter of the Greek King Erechtheus, as she was picking flowers with her playmates. He was seized with a passion for her, abducted her and took her to his cave. In this dialogue Plato causes Socrates to reject a purely rational explanation of this myth. According to such an explanation an external, natural fact is supposed to be related symbolically in the tale. A gale is supposed to have seized the king's daughter and flung her down from the cliff. “Such explanations,” says Socrates, “are very subtle and may be very entertaining ... But when one has once begun to give a rational explanation to one of these mythological figures, one must go on and look at all the others with the same scepticism and reduce them one after another to the rules of probability ... This sort of explanation would be the business of a life. If anyone disbelieves in these mythological figures, and, with a rustic kind of wisdom, undertakes to explain each in accordance with probability, he will need a great deal of leisure. But I have no leisure for such inquiries ... So I dismiss these matters and, accepting the customary belief about them as I was saying just now, I investigate not these things, but myself, to know whether I am a monster of a more complicated structure and more savage than Typhon, or a gentler and simpler creature, whose nature partakes of divinity.” (see Note 56) From this we see that a

rationalistic, intellectual interpretation of myths was unacceptable to Plato.

This must be considered together with the manner in which he himself makes use of myths to express his meaning through them. Where **he speaks of the life of the soul**, where he leaves the paths of the transitory and **seeks out the eternal in the soul, where, therefore, the ideas supported by material perception and intellectual thought are no longer present**, there Plato makes use of the myth.

The Phaedrus speaks of the eternal in the soul. Here **the soul is represented as a team of two many-winged horses with a charioteer**. One of the horses is patient and wise, the other stubborn and wild. When the team encounters an obstruction in its path, the stubborn horse makes use of this to hinder the intentions of the good one and thwart the charioteer. When the team arrives at the point where it should follow the gods over the heavens, the bad horse brings it into a state of confusion. Whether the bad horse is overcome by the good and the team is able to enter the supersensible realm beyond the obstruction, depends on the power of the bad horse. So it happens that the soul is never able to raise itself unhindered to the realm of the divine. **Some souls raise themselves to this vision of eternity in a greater degree than others. The soul which has seen the beyond remains safe until the next traverse**; the soul which — because of the wild horse — has seen nothing, must make the attempt on a new traverse. **By these traverses are meant the [spirit's various soul incarnations].**

Like the Christian "born again" experience, ASP is an accelerated re-incarnation of spirit. Like-wise dreaming and waking, though less of a crisis, and any imaginative sojourn in literature or art, novel or play.

One traverse denotes the life of the soul in one personality. The wild horse represents the lower nature, the wise horse the higher nature, and the charioteer the soul longing for its apotheosis. Plato makes use of the myth to show the path of the eternal soul through various stages. Similarly, **in other writings of Plato, myth or symbolical narrative is used to show the inner being of man, the part not perceptible to the senses.**

Here Plato is in full accord with the manner of expression by myth and parable used by others. In ancient Indian literature we find a parable attributed to Buddha. A man much attached to life, who on no account wishes to die, who seeks for sensual pleasure, is pursued by four serpents. He hears a voice which commands him to feed and bathe the four serpents from time to time. The man runs away for fear of the evil serpents. Again he hears a voice. This draws his attention to five murderers who are coming after him. Again the man runs away. A voice draws his attention to a sixth murderer who wishes to strike off his head with a drawn sword. Again the man flees. He comes to a deserted village. He hears a voice which tells him that thieves will shortly plunder the village. As he continues to flee he comes to a great expanse of water. He does not feel safe on this shore; he makes a basket for himself out of straw, sticks and leaves; in this he reaches the further shore. Now he is safe; he is a Brahmin. The sense of this parable is that man must pass through the most varied conditions to attain to the divine. In the four serpents may be seen the four

elements, fire, water, earth and air. In the five murderers may be seen the five senses. The deserted village is the soul which has fled from the impressions of the senses, but is not yet safe when alone with itself. If the soul inwardly takes hold of its lower nature only, it must perish. Man must fashion a boat for himself which will carry him over the waters of the transitory from one shore, material nature, to the other, the eternal and divine.

Let us consider the **Egyptian mystery of Osiris** in this light. Gradually Osiris had become one of the most important Egyptian divinities. His representation supplanted other representations of gods in certain parts of the country. A significant series of myths formed itself around the figures of Osiris and his consort Isis. Osiris was the son of the sun god; Typhon-Set was his brother and Isis his sister. Osiris married his sister. With her he reigned over Egypt. The evil brother, Typhon, plotted the destruction of Osiris. He caused a casket to be made of the exact size of Osiris. At a banquet the casket was offered as a gift to anyone who exactly fitted into it. No one succeeded in this but Osiris. He laid himself in it. Then Typhon and his accomplices hurled themselves upon Osiris, closed the casket and threw it into the river. When Isis received the dreadful news she was desperate and wandered everywhere searching for the corpse of her husband. When she had found him, Typhon again gained power over him. He tore him into fourteen pieces, which were scattered far apart in different districts. Various tombs of Osiris were shown in Egypt. Here and there in many places pieces of the god were said to have been laid to rest. Osiris himself ascended from the nether world and conquered Typhon; a ray from Osiris then fell upon Isis, who bore him the son Harpocrates or Horus.

Now let us **compare this myth with the way the world was understood by the Greek philosopher Empedocles** (490–430 B. C.). He assumes that **the single archetypal being was torn into the four elements, fire, water, earth and air — into the multiplicity of [physical] existence**. He sets in opposition to each other two powers which affect growth and decay within the world of existence: love and strife. Empedocles says of the elements:

“There are these alone; but, running through one another, They become men and the tribes of beasts. At one time all are brought together into one order by Love; At another, each is carried in different directions by the repulsion of Strife.” (see Note 57)

Then from Empedocles' standpoint what are the things of the world? They are the elements, variously mixed. They could come into existence only through the tearing apart of the archetypal One into the four entities. **This archetypal One is diffused into the elements of the world. All the things that meet us partake of the diffused divinity, but this divinity is hidden within them. It first had to die, so that the things could come into existence.** And what are these things? They are mixtures of portions of the god, influenced in their structure by love and hate. Empedocles says this distinctly:

“This is manifest in the mass of mortal limbs. At one time all the limbs that are the body's portion Are brought together by Love in blooming life's high season; At another, severed by cruel Strife, They wander each alone by the breakers of life's sea. It is the same with plants, with fish that live in waters, With beasts living on hills, with seabirds sailing on wings.” (see Note 58)

Empedocles must take the view that **the sage rediscovers the divine archetypal unity which is spellbound in the world, interwoven with love and hate**. But if man is to find the divine he himself must become divine, for Empedocles takes his stand on the basis that only equals can recognize each other. His conviction of the laws of cognition is expressed in Goethe's saying, “If the eye were not of the nature of the sun how could we see the light? If God's own power did not live within us how could we strive for the divine?”

In the myth of Osiris the mystic is able to find these thoughts about the world and man, which transcend the experience of the senses. The divine creative force is diffused in the world. It appears as the four elements. **The god (Osiris) has been slain. Man, with his cognition, which is of a divine nature, is to wake him again; he is to find him again as Horus (Son of God, Logos, Wisdom) in the antithesis of Strife (Typhon) and Love (Isis).** Empedocles expresses his basic conviction in Greek form with ideas reminiscent of the myths. Aphrodite is Love; Neikos, Strife. **They bind and release the elements.**

Such an exposition of **the content of a myth must not be confused with a merely symbolical or allegorical interpretation.** This is not intended here. **The pictures comprising the content of a myth are not invented symbols for abstract truths, but real soul experiences of the initiate. He experiences the pictures with spiritual organs of perception as a normal man experiences the representations of material things with his eyes and ears.** Just as the representation is of little value by itself if it is not activated by perception of the external object, so **the mythological picture is of little value without its activation through real occurrences in the spiritual world. It is only with respect to the material world that man at first stands outside the activating things; on the other hand, he can experience the mythological pictures only when he stands within the corresponding spiritual events.** To be able to stand within the latter, in the opinion of the ancient mystics, **he must have passed through initiation.** There the spiritual events which he sees are illustrated as it were, by the mythological pictures. Whoever is unable to take mythology as such an illustration of true spiritual events, has not yet advanced to a comprehension of mythology. For **the spiritual events themselves are supersensible, and pictures whose content is reminiscent of the material world are not in themselves spiritual, but are merely an illustration of the spiritual.**

Perceptual psychologists tell us that it only seems we stand outside material object looking on, when in fact our very consciousness participates in formation of objective appearance. So, unless we can

re-orient our worldview ahead of time, any perception of spiritual objects, whether sought or accidental (such as ASP or OBE) will be filtered through a lens of imaginations comprised of familiar things, places and peoples typical of material experience. Even spiritual members of my own being --from bestial drives to godly aspirations-- will appear as if confronting separate environments or entities. These images, like living myth, represent truths, though only dreamlike phantasms in themselves. ASP sufferers are prone, like neophyte mystics, to interpret these mythical experiences as mere echoes of the physical, so only material events are indicated as causes, triggers or even messages (past, present or future). Otherwise one must approach percepts on that side by first believing that spiritual events and persons are factual and thus rendering themselves as imagery. Just so, a motor car would appear to an ancient mind as some sort of magical chariot, having no other conceptual category to represent the percept. The perceptual gap would naturally be much greater in ASP, as unsought or accidental initiates.

Whoever lives [exclusively in the illustrative] pictures, lives in a dream; he lives in spiritual perception only when he has reached the point of **experiencing the spiritual [corresponding to] the picture**, just as in the material world one experiences the rose through the representation of the rose. This is also the reason why the pictures presented by myths cannot have only a single meaning. **Because of their illustrative character, the same myths can express various spiritual facts.** It is, **therefore, no contradiction** when interpreters of myths apply them now to one spiritual fact and again to a different one.

From this point of view a thread can be found running through the manifold Greek myths. Let us consider the **legend of Hercules**. The twelve labors imposed on Hercules are seen in a higher light when one reflects that before the last and most difficult one he was initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. At the command of King Eurystheus of Mycenae he was to fetch Cerberus, the hound of hell, from the nether world, and take him back there again. **To be able to undertake a journey into the nether world, Hercules had to be an initiate.** The Mysteries led man through the death of the transitory and thus into the nether world; through initiation they wished to save the eternal element in him from destruction. As a mystic he could overcome death. Hercules overcame the dangers of the nether world as a mystic. **This justifies the interpretation of his other deeds as stages of the inner development of the soul.** He overcame the Nemean lion and brought him to Mycenae. This means that he became master of the purely physical force in man; he tamed it. Next he slew the nine-headed Hydra. He overcame it with firebrands, dipping his arrows in its gall so that they would never miss their mark. This means that he overcame lower knowledge, the knowledge of the senses, through the fire of the spirit, and out of what he had gained from this lower knowledge he drew the

strength to see the lower world in the light belonging to the spiritual eye. Hercules caught the doe of Artemis. The latter is the goddess of the chase. Hercules hunted down what the free nature of the human soul can offer. The other labors can be interpreted in a similar way. We cannot follow them in every detail here; our intention is only to show how **the general sense of the myth itself points to inner development**

The evangelical Christian, especially within a Charismatic or Pentecostal fellowship, comes to view the course of life events in just such a mythological way. Meanwhile, the intellectually consistent materialist will even interpret dreams and imaginations positivistically, insisting that the most fantastic mental creations can truly represent only physiological facts. Thus Freud reduced hosts of dream images to mere sexuality or some other bestial body function. Jung disagreed, but could never go to such lengths as Christians, who will even personalize factual physical events as indicators of super-material influences –as if it were road signs set purposely by heavenly attendants along their inner spiritual path.

A similar interpretation is possible for the **voyage of the Argonauts**. Phrixus and his sister Helle, children of a Boeotian king, suffered greatly at the hands of their stepmother. The gods sent a ram with a golden fleece to them, which carried them away through the air. As they crossed the straits between Europe and Asia, Helle was drowned. Hence the straits are called the Hellespont. Phrixus reached the king of Colchis on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. He sacrificed the ram to the gods and presented the fleece to the King Aetes. The latter had it hung in a grove and guarded by a frightful dragon. The Greek hero, Jason, together with the other heroes, Hercules, Theseus and Orpheus, undertook to fetch the fleece from Colchis. Jason was charged with difficult tasks before he could reach the treasure of Aetes. But Medea, the daughter of the king, who was versed in magic, helped him. He tamed two fire-breathing bulls; he ploughed a field and sowed dragons' teeth, so that armed men grew out of the earth. On the advice of Medea he threw a stone among the men, whereupon they murdered one another. By means of a magic potion from Medea, Jason put the dragon to sleep; then he was able to obtain the fleece. With this he embarked upon the return journey to Greece. Medea accompanied him as his wife. The king pursued the fugitives. To delay him, Medea slew her little brother Absyrtus, scattering his limbs upon the sea. Aetes was delayed in gathering them up. Hence the couple were able to reach Jason's home with the fleece. — Here **every single fact demands a deeper explanation**. The fleece is **something belonging to man, something of infinite value** to him; in ancient times it **was separated from him** and its recapture involves the overcoming of terrible powers. **So it is with the eternal in the human soul. It belongs to man. But he finds himself separated from it. His lower nature separates him from it. Only when he overcomes this lower nature, puts the latter to sleep, can he regain it.** This is possible when his own consciousness (Medea) comes to his aid

with its magic force. Medea becomes for Jason what Diotima, as the teacher of love, was for Socrates (see Note in Chapter 4). Human wisdom possesses the magic force to reach the divine after overcoming the transitory. Out of the lower nature can come only a lower human element, the armed men, which is overcome by the force of the spiritual element, the advice of Medea. **Even when man has found his eternal element, the Recce, he is not yet safe. He must sacrifice a part of his consciousness** (Absyrtus). This is demanded by the material world, which we can conceive of only as manifold (torn to pieces). We could penetrate still more deeply into the description of the spiritual events lying behind these pictures, but here we intend only to indicate the principle of myth formation.

Of particular interest in relation to such an interpretation is the **saga of Prometheus**. Prometheus and Epimetheus were the sons of the Titan, Japetos. The Titans were the children of the oldest generation of the gods, of Uranos (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth). Kronos, the youngest of the Titans, dethroned his father and seized the rulership of the world. For this, together with the remaining Titans, he was overpowered by his son Zeus. And Zeus became supreme among the gods. In the battle with the Titans, Prometheus stood at the side of Zeus. On his advice Zeus banished the Titans into the nether world. But the Titans' attitude of mind continued to live in Prometheus. He was only half a friend to Zeus. When Zeus wished to destroy men for their presumption, Prometheus took their part, teaching them the art of numbers and writing, as well as other things leading to culture, especially the use of fire. Because of this Zeus was angry with Prometheus. Hephaestus, the son of Zeus, was commissioned to fashion the image of a woman of great beauty, which the gods adorned with all kinds of gifts. This woman was known as Pandora, the all-gifted. Hermes, the messenger of the gods, brought her to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. She brought him a casket as a gift from the gods. Epimetheus accepted the gift, despite the fact that Prometheus had advised him on no account to accept a gift from the gods. When the casket was opened, out flew all kinds of human plagues. Hope alone remained inside, and that only because Pandora quickly closed the lid. Therefore Hope has remained as the doubtful gift of the gods. — At the command of Zeus, Prometheus was chained to a rock in the Caucasus because of his relationship with men. An eagle constantly fed upon his liver, which continually renewed itself. Prometheus had to pass his days in tortured solitude until one of the gods voluntarily sacrificed himself, that is, dedicated himself to death. The tortured one bore his suffering steadfastly. He had learned that Zeus would be dethroned by the son of a mortal woman if he did not marry her. Zeus was anxious to know this secret; he sent the messenger of the gods, Hermes, to Prometheus to discover something about it. Prometheus denied him any information. — The legend of Hercules is linked with that of Prometheus. During his travels Hercules also came to the Caucasus. He killed the eagle which was consuming the liver of Prometheus. The centaur, Chiron, who could not die, although suffering from an incurable wound, sacrificed himself for Prometheus. Then the latter was reconciled with the gods.

The Titans are the force of will streaming from the original cosmic spirit (Uranos) in the form of nature (Kronos). Here we must not think of merely abstract forces of will, but of **real beings of will**. Prometheus belongs among the latter. This characterizes his being. But he is not entirely a Titan. In a certain sense he sides with Zeus, the spirit who assumed the rulership of the world after the unbridled nature-force (Kronos) had been tamed. Prometheus, therefore, represents those worlds which **have given man that forward-striving, which is a force half of nature, half of spirit — the will**. On the one side the will is directed toward good, on the other side toward evil. Its destiny is formed according to whether it inclines toward the spiritual or the transitory. This destiny is the destiny of man himself. **Man is chained to the transitory**. The eagle gnaws at him. He must endure it. He can only attain the heights when he seeks his destiny in solitude. He has a secret. Its content is that **the divine (Zeus) must marry a mortal, human consciousness itself, which is bound to the physical body, in order to bring forth a son, human wisdom (the Logos), who will redeem the god. Through this, consciousness becomes immortal**. Man may not betray this secret until a mystic (Hercules) approaches him and removes the power which continually threatens him with death. **A being, half animal, half human — a centaur — must sacrifice himself to redeem man**. The centaur is man himself, the half animal, half spiritual man. **He must die so that the purely spiritual man may be redeemed**. What Prometheus, the human will, despises, is taken by Epimetheus, the intellect, shrewdness. But the gifts offered to Epimetheus are only troubles and plagues. **For the intellect clings to nothingness, to the transitory. And only one thing remains — the hope that out of the transitory, one day the eternal may be born**.

The thread running through the legends of the Argonauts, Hercules and Prometheus, also holds good for the poem of the *Odyssey* by Homer. The use of this method of interpretation in studying the latter work, may appear forced. But upon a closer examination of everything that has to be considered, even the most hardened doubter must lose his misgivings about such an interpretation. Above all, it must surprise us to find it related of Odysseus also that he descended to the nether world. Whatever we may think of the author of the *Odyssey* in other respects, it is impossible to credit him with **causing a mortal being to descend to the nether world** without bringing him into relationship with all that the journey to the nether world signified in the Greek world conception. It **signified the overcoming of the transitory and the awakening of the eternal in the soul**. That Odysseus achieved this must, therefore, be admitted. With this his **experiences, like those of Hercules, gain a deeper meaning**. They become a description of something which does not belong to the material world, **a description of the soul's path of development**. In addition, the *Odyssey* is not [narrated] as one would expect of a sequence of external facts. The hero makes voyages on magic ships. Actual geographical distances are treated in a most arbitrary way. Material reality is simply irrelevant. This becomes comprehensible if the **actual events are related only in order to illustrate spiritual development**. Furthermore, the author himself **states in his introduction** to the work, that it deals with the search for the soul: "Tell me, O

Muse, of **the man of many devices, who wandered** full many ways after he had **reached the sacred citadel of Troy**. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose mind he learned, aye, and many the woes he suffered in his heart **upon the sea, seeking to win his own soul** and the return of his comrades.” (see Note 59)

Here we have a man seeking for the soul, the divine element, and his wanderings in search of this divine element are related. — He comes to the land of the Cyclops. These are ungainly giants with one eye in their foreheads. Polyphemus, the most terrible of them, devours several of his companions. Odysseus saves himself by blinding the Cyclops. Here we are dealing with **the first stage of life's pilgrimage. Physical power, the lower nature, must be overcome. Whoever does not deprive it of its strength, whoever does not blind it, will be devoured by it.** — Odysseus then reaches the island of the witch Circe. She transforms some of his companions into grunting swine. She also is conquered by him. Circe represents the lower spiritual force which clings to the transitory. Through abuse of this force she can thrust humanity only deeper into its animal nature. — Odysseus must overcome her. Then he can descend into the nether world. He becomes a mystic. Now he is exposed to the dangers which beset a mystic on his ascent from the lower to the higher stages of initiation. He reaches **the Sirens** who lure passing travelers to their death with sounds of enchanting sweetness. **These are the images produced by the lower fantasy, the first things to be followed by anyone who has freed himself from the material world.** He has come as far as free creative activity, but not as far as the initiated spirit. **He chases after illusory images and must free himself from their power.**

Here is an apt description of the dilemma confronted by the ASP adventurer ... after having overcome the fear of disembodiment. We are presented a whole new world of fantastic possibilities, temptations, all seemingly free of physical consequences. I guess that for many this is where the journey would end, were it not for rude intrusion of another kind of horror. The longer one stays to play and only play, the surer it becomes that every pleasure ends in a kind of hell --like the bizarre judgment of Pinocchio's donkey ears on Pleasure Island.

— Odysseus must traverse the awesome passage between Scylla and Charybdis. In his early stages the mystic wavers between spirit and sensuality. He is still unable to grasp the full content of the spirit, but sensuality has already lost its earlier value. All Odysseus' companions perish in a shipwreck; he alone saves himself and finds the nymph Calypso, who receives him in friendship and cares for him for seven years. At last, at the command of Zeus, she releases him to return to his home. The mystic has reached a stage at which **all who are striving with him, fail, except Odysseus, who alone is worthy. In peace this worthy one enjoys gradual initiation for a period defined by the mystically symbolical number seven.** — Before Odysseus reaches his home, however, he comes to the island of the Phaeacians. Here he is hospitably received. The king's daughter is interested in him

and King Alcinous himself entertains him and does him honor. Once again Odysseus encounters the world and its pleasures, and the spirit which cling to the world (Nausicaä) awakens in him. However, he finds the way home to the divine. At first nothing good awaits him at home. His wife, Penelope, is surrounded by numerous suitors. To each she promises marriage when she has finished a certain piece of weaving. She avoids keeping her promise by unraveling at night what she has woven during the day. The suitors must be overcome by Odysseus so that he may be reunited with his wife in peace. **The goddess Athene transforms him into a beggar so that he will not be recognized** at once upon entering his house. Then he overcomes the suitors. — **Odysseus seeks his own deeper consciousness, the divine forces of the soul. He wishes to be united with them.** Before the mystic finds them **he must overcome everything which lays claim to this consciousness in the form of a suitor.** This crowd of suitors comes **from the world of lower reality, of transitory nature.** The logic applicable to this world is a weaving which continually unravels itself after it has been spun. **Wisdom (the goddess Athene) is the sure guide to the deepest forces of the soul. She transforms man into a beggar, i.e. she divests him of all that is derived from the transitory.**

The Eleusinian Festivals, celebrated in Greece in honor of Demeter and Dionysus, appear steeped in Mystery wisdom. A sacred road led from Athens to Eleusis. It was marked with secret signs which could bring the soul into a mood of deep reverence. In Eleusis were secret temple buildings which were served by priestly families. Dignity and the wisdom with which this dignity was connected, were inherited in these priest families from generation to generation. (Information concerning these places of worship may be found in the book, *Ergänzungen zu den letzten Untersuchungen auf der Acropolis in Athen* by Karl Bötticher, Philologus, Suppl. Vol. 3 Section 3.) The wisdom making it possible for services to be enacted there, was the Greek Mystery wisdom. The festivals, **celebrated twice yearly, displayed the great cosmic drama of the destiny of the divine in the world and the destiny of the human soul.** The Minor Mysteries were celebrated in February, the Major Mysteries in September. **Initiations were connected with the festivals.** The symbolical presentation of the drama of man and the cosmos formed the concluding act of the initiations undertaken there. The Eleusinian temples were erected in honor of the goddess Demeter. She is a daughter of Kronos. She bore a daughter, Persephone, to Zeus, before his marriage to Hera. Once while Persephone was playing, she was kidnaped by Pluto, the god of the nether world. Demeter, lamenting, hastened to search for her all over the earth. In Eleusis the daughters of Keleus, a local ruler, found Demeter sitting on a rock. Taking the form of an old woman she entered the service of Keleus' family as nurse to the son of the ruler's wife. She wished to endow this son with immortality. Therefore she hid him every night in the fire. When the mother once observed this, she wept and lamented. Henceforth the bestowal of immortality was impossible. Demeter left the house. Keleus built a temple. Demeter's sorrow for Persephone was limitless. She caused famine to spread over the earth. To avoid disaster the gods were obliged to placate her. Pluto was persuaded by Zeus to allow Persephone to return to the upper world. Before this, however, the god of the nether world gave her a pomegranate to eat.

Because of this she was compelled to return to the nether world again and again at regular intervals. From then on she spent one third of the year in the nether world and two thirds in the upper world. Demeter was reconciled; she returned to Olympus. But in Eleusis, the place of her anguish, she founded the service of the festivals to commemorate her fate for ever.

The **meaning of the Demeter-Persephone myth** is not difficult to recognize. It is the soul which alternates between the lower and the upper world. **The eternity of the soul and its eternal transformation through birth and death, is represented pictorially.** The soul is descended from Demeter, the immortal. But it is carried off by the transitory and becomes destined to share in the fate of the transitory. It has eaten the fruit in the nether world; **the human soul is satiated with the transitory and therefore cannot dwell continually in the divine heights. It must always return to the realm of the transitory.**

One mystery has remained unanswered for ASP sufferers, especially for those who actually begin to seek or hope for new experiences. Why is each foray into conscious spiritual being so brief? Perhaps the reason and the remedy is hinted here.

Demeter represents that being from which human consciousness has sprung; but this consciousness must be thought of as having been able to come into existence through the spiritual forces of the earth. Thus Demeter is the archetypal being of the earth, and her gift to the earth in the form of the forces in the seeds and the produce of the fields, only indicates a still deeper aspect of her being. This being wishes to endow humanity with immortality. Demeter hides her nursling in the fire at night. But man cannot endure the pure power of fire (the spirit). Demeter must desist. She can only found the temple service through which man may participate in the divine insofar as he is able to do so.

The Eleusinian Festivals were an eloquent acknowledgment of belief in the eternity of the human soul. This acknowledgment found pictorial expression in the myth about Persephone. Dionysus was celebrated in Eleusis, together with Demeter and Persephone. As in Demeter was worshiped the divine creatrix of the eternal In man, so in Dionysus was worshiped the divine element, ever changing in the whole world. The god who had been diffused into the world and had been torn to pieces in order to be re-born spiritually (see Note in Chapter 4), had to be celebrated together with Demeter. (A splendid presentation of the spirit of the Eleusinian Mysteries is to be found in the book, *Sanctuaires d'Orient* by Édouard Schuré. Paris, 1898.)

Egyptian Mystery Wisdom

If my reader is starting with this chapter, be encouraged to persevere despite prior orientation, whether evangelical or orthodox Christian, or

otherwise. Steiner is not ‘reducing’ the historical Jesus Christ to the same level as Egyptian Osiris-Horus mythology, nor is he raising the ancient Indian legend of Buddha to the status of Christ. One must acknowledge parallels between the Gospels and the spiritual consciousnesses of prior cultural eras. This is fundamental to understanding how old Simeon could proclaim blessings on God for having fulfilled the great promise: “... thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” That the Christ would complete God’s plan to save his people Israel-- this was understandable and expected. But prophecies that God’s Chosen would also fulfill the spiritual traditions of other peoples ... it was a notion foreign to Jews, blasphemous to Jewish teachers. Early Christian church leaders struggled profoundly with the idea. Modern Christians should pray to overcome similar bias to recognize that pagan paths of spiritual seeking may also converge finally upon the person of Christ Jesus as the one Way, the Truth and the Light.

“WHEN RELEASED FROM THE BODY YOU ascend to the free aether, you will become an immortal god, escaping death.” In these words Empedocles epitomizes what the ancient Egyptians thought about the eternal in man and its connection with the divine. Evidence of this is provided by the so-called **Book of the Dead**, which has been deciphered by the diligence of nineteenth century research workers. (See Lepsius, *Das Totenbuch der alten Ägypter*, Berlin, 1842.) It is “the greatest coherent literary work of the Egyptians which has been preserved to us.” It contains all kinds of teachings and prayers, which were put in the grave with each dead person to guide him when he was released from his mortal frame. **The Egyptians' most intimate conceptions about the eternal and the genesis of the world are contained in this literary work.** These conceptions indeed indicate **ideas of the gods similar to those of Greek mysticism.** — Of the various deities worshiped in different parts of Egypt, Osiris gradually became the favorite and most universally acknowledged. In him the ideas about the other divinities were summarized. Whatever the Egyptian populace may have thought about Osiris, the Book of the Dead indicates that according to the ideas of priestly wisdom he was a being which could be found in the human soul itself. — This is expressed clearly in everything they thought about death and the dead. **When the body is given up to the earth, preserved within the earthly element, then the eternal part of man sets out upon the path to the primordial eternal. It is called to judgment before Osiris,** who is surrounded by forty-two judges of the dead. The fate of the eternal in man depends upon the verdict of these judges. If the soul has confessed its sins and is found to be reconciled with eternal righteousness, invisible powers approach it, saying, “The Osiris N. has been purified in the pool which is south of the field of Hoteb and north of the field of Locusts, where the gods of verdure purify themselves at the fourth hour of the night and the eighth hour of the day with the

image of the heart of the gods, passing from night to day.” Thus within the eternal cosmic order the eternal part of man is addressed as an Osiris. After the title Osiris, the individual name of the person concerned is mentioned. **The person who is uniting himself with the eternal cosmic order also calls himself “Osiris.”** “I am Osiris N. Growing under the blossoms of the fig tree is the name of Osiris N.” (see Note 60) Thus man becomes an Osiris. The Osiris-existence is only a perfect stage of development of human existence. It seems obvious that even **the Osiris who judges within the eternal cosmic order is none other than a perfect man.** Between human existence and divine existence is a difference in degree and number. At the root of this lies the conception of the Mysteries concerning the mystery of “number.” **The cosmic being Osiris is One; nevertheless he exists undivided in every human soul. Each man is an Osiris, yet the one Osiris must be represented as a special being.** Man is engaged in development; at the end of his evolutionary course lies his existence as a god. Within this conception one must speak of divinity rather than of a perfected, completed divine being.

There is no doubt that according to such a conception **only one who has already reached the gate of the eternal cosmic order as an Osiris can really enter upon Osiris-existence.** So the highest life man can lead must consist in changing himself into an Osiris. In the true man an Osiris must already live as perfectly as possible during mortal life. **Man becomes perfect when he lives as an Osiris, when he experiences what Osiris has experienced.** In this way **the Osiris myth** receives its deeper significance. It **becomes the example of a man who wishes to awaken the eternal within him.** Osiris had been torn to pieces, killed by Typhon. The fragments of his body were cherished and cared for by his consort Isis. **After his death [Osiris] let a ray of his light fall upon [Isis], and she bore him [the son] Horus.** Horus took over the earthly tasks of Osiris. **He is the second Osiris, still imperfect but progressing** toward the true Osiris. — **The true Osiris is in the human soul.** The latter is **of a transitory nature at first.** However, its transitory nature is **destined to give birth to the eternal.** Therefore **man may consider himself to be the tomb of Osiris.** The lower nature (Typhon) has killed the higher nature in him. Love in his soul (Isis) must cherish and care for the dead fragments; then will be born the higher nature, the eternal soul (Horus), which can progress to Osiris-existence. **Whoever strives toward the highest existence must repeat in himself, as a microcosm, the macrocosmic, universal process of Osiris. This is the meaning of the Egyptian “initiation.”** The process Plato describes as cosmic, — i.e., that **the Creator has stretched the soul of the world upon the body of the world in the form of a cross,** and that **the cosmic process is a redemption of this crucified soul** (see Note in Chapter 4) (see page) — on a small scale this process had to happen to man if he was to be capable of Osiris-existence.

The ancient pictoglyph depicting man as god enfleshed is commonly found by archeologists inscribed on Egyptian tombs. The same sign was later adopted by the early Orthodox Church as the universal Christian symbol of the Cross.

The neophyte had to develop himself in such a way that his soul-experience, his development as an Osiris, became identified with the cosmic Osiris process. **If we could look into the temples of initiation where people were subjected to the transformation into Osiris, we would see that what happened there represented microcosmically the creation of the world. Man, who is descended from the “Father,” was to give birth in himself to the Son. The spellbound god, whom he actually bore within him, was to be revealed in him. The power of earthly nature suppressed this god within him. First this lower nature had to be buried in order that the higher nature might rise again.** From this it becomes possible to interpret what is told of the processes of initiation. The candidate was subjected to secret procedures. By means of [these procedures] his earthly nature was killed and his higher nature awakened.

For clarity, there was probably bloodletting and/or use of chemical neuro-toxins traumatizing the candidate’s body, inducing a coma and thus releasing spiritual consciousness from the physical senses for a prescribed period. Then reviving the body would restore the soul-body bond, but retaining the new spiritual perspective of the out-of-body experience. Other near-death methods accomplished the same in other cultures, such as water and fire baptisms. Ancient sacrificial rites, old and new world, became a pictorial celebration performed before the general populace, sanctifying in their worldview what was done guardedly by their priests on behalf of initiates. These practices naturally became corrupted as outward shows, demonstrations of political power by priests and military dictators. They could thereby wield terror to command the common people’s allegiance.

It is not necessary to study these procedures in detail. One must only understand their meaning. And this **meaning is contained in the acknowledgment which everyone who has been through initiation could make.** He could say: Before me floated the endless perspective, at the end of which lies the perfection of the divine. **I felt the power of the divine within me. I buried what holds down this power within me. I died to earthly things. I was dead. As a lower man I had died; I was in the netherworld. I communicated with the dead, that is, with those who already have become part of the circle of the eternal cosmic order. After my sojourn in the nether world I arose from the dead. I overcame death, but now I have become different.** I have nothing more to do with transitory nature. **My transitory nature has become permeated by the Logos. I now belong to those who live eternally, and who will sit at the right hand of Osiris.** I myself shall be a true Osiris, united with the eternal cosmic order, **and judgment over death and life shall be placed in my hand.** — The neophyte had to undergo the experience which could lead him to such an acknowledgment. The experience which thus approached man was of the highest kind.

Let us now imagine that a non-initiate hears that someone has undergone such experiences. He cannot know what has really taken place in the soul of the initiate. **In [a non-initiate's] eyes, the initiate has died physically, has lain in the grave and has risen.** When expressed in terms of material reality an occurrence which has spiritual reality at a higher stage of existence appears to break through the order of nature. **It [appears to be] a “miracle.” Such a “miracle” was initiation.** Whoever wished [truly] to understand it must have awakened within himself powers which would enable him to reach a higher stage of existence. He had to prepare the whole course of his life in order to approach these higher experiences. However they might take place in individual lives, **these prepared experiences always [followed] a quite definite, typical [pattern]. So the life of an initiate is a [predictable] one.** It may be described apart from the individual personality. Or rather, an individual personality could be characterized only as being on the way toward the divine if he had gone through these definite, typical experiences. **As such a personality the Buddha lived with his followers; as such a personality Jesus at first appeared to his community. Today we know of the parallels which exist between the biographies of Buddha and of Jesus.** Rudolf Seydel has pointed out these parallels strikingly in his book, *Buddha and Christ*. We need only follow up the details to see that all objections to these parallels are futile.

The birth of Buddha is announced by a white elephant who descends to Maya, the queen. He declares that she will bring forth a divine man who “attunes all people to love and friendship and unites them in an intimate company.” In Luke's Gospel is written: “... to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, ‘Hail thou that art highly favored ... Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest.’” Maya's dream is interpreted by the Brahmins, the Indian priests, who know that it signifies the birth of a Buddha. They have a definite, typical idea of a Buddha. The life of the individual personality will have to correspond to this idea. Correspondingly we read in Matthew 2:1, et seq., that when Herod “had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.” — The Brahmin Asita says of Buddha, “This is the child which will become Buddha, the redeemer, the leader to immortality, freedom and light.” Compare this with Luke 2:5: “And behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him ... And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” It is related of Buddha that at the age of twelve he was lost, and was found again under a tree, surrounded by minstrels and sages of ancient times, whom he was teaching. This corresponds to Luke 2:41–47: “Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the

custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." — After Buddha had lived in solitude and had returned, he was received by the benediction of a virgin: "Blessed is the mother, blessed is the father, blessed is the wife to whom thou belongest." But he replied, "Only they are blessed who are in Nirvana," i.e., those who have entered the eternal cosmic order. In Luke 11:2–28 is written: "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto him, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.' But he said, 'Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.'" In the course of Buddha's life the tempter approaches him, promising him all the kingdoms of the earth. Buddha will have nothing to do with this, answering, "I know well that a kingdom is appointed to me, but I do not desire an earthly one; I shall become Buddha and make all the world exult for joy." The tempter has to admit, "My reign is over." Jesus answers the same temptation in the words: "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him." (Matthew 4:10,11) — This description of parallelism might be extended to many other points: the results would be the same. — **The life of Buddha ended sublimely.** During a journey he felt ill. He came to the river Hiranja, near Kuschinagara. There he lay down on a carpet spread for him by his favorite disciple, Ananda. His body began to shine from within. **He died transfigured, a body of light, saying, "Nothing endures."** **The death of Buddha corresponds with the transfiguration of Jesus:** "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." **At this point Buddha's earthly life ends, but the most important part of the life of Jesus begins here: Passion, Death and Resurrection.** The difference between Buddha and Christ lies in what necessitated the continuation of the life of Christ Jesus beyond that of Buddha. Buddha and Christ are not understood by simply throwing them together. (This will become evident in the subsequent chapters of this book.) Other accounts of the death of Buddha need not be considered here, although they also reveal profound aspects of the subject.

The conformity in the lives of these two redeemers leads to an unequivocal conclusion. What this conclusion must be, the narratives themselves indicate. **When the priest sages hear about the manner of the birth they know what is involved. They know that they are dealing with a divine man.** They know beforehand what conditions will exist for the personality who is appearing. **Therefore his career can only correspond with what they know about the career of a divine man. Such a career appears in their Mystery wisdom,**

marked out for all eternity. It can be only as it must be. Such a career **appears as an eternal law of nature.** Just as a chemical substance can behave only in a quite definite way, so **a Buddha or a Christ** can live only in a quite definite way. His career cannot be described as one would write his incidental biography; rather, **it is described by giving the typical features contained for all time in the wisdom of the Mysteries.** The legend of Buddha is **no more a biography in the ordinary sense, than the Gospels are intended to be an ordinary biography of the Christ Jesus.** Neither describes an incidental career; both describe **a career marked out for a world-redeemer.** The **patterns for both must be sought in the traditions of the Mysteries, not in outward physical history.** To those who have perceived their divine nature, Buddha and Jesus are initiates in the most eminent sense. (Jesus is an initiate because the Christ Being incarnates in him.) Thus everything transitory is removed from their lives. **What is known about initiates can be applied to [all of] them. The incidental events of their lives are no longer described. It is said of them, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:1,14)**

The life of Jesus, however, contains more than the life of Buddha. Buddha's life ends with the transfiguration. The most significant part of the life of Jesus begins after the transfiguration. In the language of the initiates, Buddha reaches the point where divine light begins to shine in man. He stands before the death of the physical. He becomes the cosmic light. **Jesus goes further. He does not die physically at the moment the cosmic light transfigures him. At that moment he is a Buddha. But at the same moment he enters upon a stage which finds expression in a higher degree of initiation. He suffers and dies. The physical part of him disappears. But the spiritual, the cosmic light does not vanish. His resurrection follows. He reveals himself to his community as Christ.** At the moment of his transfiguration, Buddha dissolves into the hallowed life of the universal Spirit. Christ Jesus awakens this universal Spirit once more to present existence in a human form. Such an event had formerly taken place in a pictorial sense at the higher stages of initiation. **Those initiated according to the Osiris myth attained to such a resurrection in their consciousness as a pictorial experience. In the life of Jesus this “great” initiation was added to the Buddha initiation, not as a pictorial experience, but as reality.** Buddha demonstrated by his life that man is the Logos and that he returns to this Logos, to the light, when his physical part dies. **In Jesus the Logos itself became a person. In him the Word became flesh.**

What was enacted for the ancient cults of the Mysteries within the Mystery-temples, through Christianity has been grasped as a world-historical fact. His community acknowledged the Christ Jesus, the initiate, initiated in a uniquely great way. He proved to them that the world is divine. For the community of Christ, the wisdom of the Mysteries was indissolubly bound up with the personality of Christ Jesus. The belief that he lived and that those who acknowledge him, belong to him, replaced what would have been attained previously through the

Mysteries. — Henceforth for those in the community of Christ a part of what previously was only to be attained by the methods of the mystics, could be replaced by the conviction that the divine is given in the Word which had been present. The determining factor was no longer only that for which each individual spirit had to undergo a long preparation, but also **the account of what they had heard and seen, handed down by those who were with Jesus.** “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we ourselves have beheld, which our hands have touched, concerning the Word of life ... that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you, that you may have fellowship with us.” Thus it is written in the first Epistle of John. **This immediate reality is to embrace all future generations in a living bond; as a Church it is to extend mystically from generation to generation.** In this way we may understand the words of Augustine, “I should not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church.” (see Note 61) **The Gospels**, therefore, contain in themselves no [physical] evidence of their truth, but they **are to be believed because they are founded on the personality of Jesus, and because in a mysterious way the Church draws from this personality the power to [reveal them] as truth.** The Mysteries handed down through tradition the means of coming to the truth; the Christian community propagates this truth itself. **Faith in the One, the primordial Initiator was to be added to faith in the mystical forces which light up in man's inner being during initiation.** The mystics sought apotheosis; they wished to experience it. Jesus was made divine; we must cling to him; **then we are participants in his apotheosis within the community established by him:** — This became Christian conviction. What was made divine in Jesus, is made divine for his whole community. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20) The one born in Bethlehem has an eternal character. Thus the Christmas antiphon is able to speak of the birth of Jesus as if it took place every Christmas: “Today Christ is born; today the Saviour has come into the world; today the angels are singing on earth.” (see Note 62) — In the Christ-experience a quite definite stage of initiation is to be seen. **When the mystic of pre-Christian times went through this Christ-experience, then, through his initiation, he was in a condition enabling him to perceive something spiritual — in higher worlds — for which the material world had no corresponding fact.** He experienced what comprises **the Mystery of Golgotha** in the higher world. **Now when the Christian mystic goes through this experience, through initiation, at the same time he beholds the historical event on Golgotha** and knows that in this event, which took place in the world of the senses, is **the same content as formerly existed only in the supersensible facts of the Mysteries.** What had descended upon the mystics within the Mystery temples in earlier times thus descended upon the community of Christ through the “Mystery of Golgotha.” And initiation gives the Christian mystic the possibility of becoming conscious of this content of the “Mystery of Golgotha,” while faith causes mankind to participate unconsciously in **the mystical current which flowed from the events depicted in the New Testament and has been permeating the spiritual life of humanity ever since.**

The Gospels

So far, I have presented text from leading chapters with little or no editing of this edition. This chapter needs abridgement as I review for continuity of argument. Perhaps a different translation would not. Steiner is basically limiting parameters of a perpetual debate over the historicity of biblical biographies. In fact, Steiner was a literalist, and more strictly so than most fundamentalist Bible scholars of today. But he is declining to engage his critics on that level, even appearing --for argument's sake-- to accept their terms, saying: "Okay, granted that the enduring significance of gospel accounts is not their debatable historical accuracy, rather that they convey spiritual truths which do not hinge on validation via physical fact." Then he takes the critic's premise to the next logical step. "So we agree that spiritual truth supersedes material verification.... Now consider that 'mystical fact' precedes all temporal events."

This is the portent of History (or Legend) having recorded the Magi pilgrimage to visit the Christ. They perceived first the spiritual event, then embarked upon their odyssey to recognize that fact in the resulting physical/historical event. They were acting as mystical scribes, recording upon the parchment of earthly time the eternal significance of material symbols for all succeeding generations of seekers; even for followers to note as a 'legend' greater than mere fact when rightly read. Hardly any scholar would care to challenge the historicity of the man who became Buddha, though there be far less literary evidence or archeological verifications. Meanwhile, these wise men, a convoy of Brahma-chasers, recognized in this prophesied son of David, King of the Jews, a spiritual personage surpassing Buddha, just as the Baptist declared that Jesus would supersede all previous prophets. All that prior initiates could ever hope to attain spiritually, only the Christ could actually realize; what is factual in the spiritual cosmos will transfigure itself in the material micro-cosmos.

And so, history presents Jesus of Nazareth. The seeming disharmony of gospel records is no less believable than the different perspectives represented in sworn testimonies of various witnesses to any other murder mystery. It may be years, even generations later that investigators reconcile apparent contradictions, given then a much broader range of facts and data than contemporaries could ever hope to have detected immediately after the event.

THE ACCOUNTS of the “Life of Jesus” which can be submitted to historical examination are contained in the Gospels. All that does not come from this source might, in the opinion of one of those who are considered the greatest historical authorities on the subject, Harnack, (see Note 62a) be “easily written on a quarto page.” But what kind of documents are these Gospels? The fourth, that of John, differs so much from the others that those who believe themselves obliged to follow the path of historical research in order to study the subject come to the conclusion: “If John possesses the genuine tradition about the life of Jesus, that of the first three Evangelists (the Synoptists) is untenable; if the Synoptists are right, the fourth Gospel must be rejected as a historical source.” (Otto Schmiedel, *Die Hauptprobleme der Leben Jesu-Forschung*, Principal Problems of Research into the Life of Jesus, p. 15.) This is a statement made from the standpoint of the historical investigator. In the present work, where we are dealing with the mystical content of the Gospels, such a point of view is neither to be accepted nor rejected. But attention must certainly be drawn to such an opinion as the following: “Measured by the standard of consistency, inspiration, and completeness, these writings leave very much to be desired; even when measured by the ordinary human standard they suffer from many imperfections.” This is the opinion of a Christian theologian (Harnack in *Wesen des Christentums*, The Nature of Christianity). **If one agrees that the Gospels have a mystical origin one finds that apparent contradictions can be explained without difficulty**, and one also discovers harmony between the fourth Gospel and the other three. **None of these writings are meant to be mere historical tradition** in the ordinary sense of the word. **They do not profess to give a [complete] historical biography** (see Note in Chapter 6). What they intended to give was already foreshadowed in the traditions of the Mysteries, as the typical life of the Son of God. It was these traditions which were drawn upon, not history. Now it was only natural that these traditions should not be in literal agreement in every Mystery center. Nevertheless the agreement was so close that the Buddhists narrated the life of their divine man in almost the same way as the Evangelists narrated the life of Christ. But naturally there were differences. We need only assume that **the four Evangelists drew from four different Mystery traditions**. It is **evidence of the towering personality of Jesus** that in four writers belonging to different traditions, he awakened the belief that he so perfectly corresponded with their type of an initiate **that they were able to describe him as one who lived the [prescribed pattern of] life marked out in their Mysteries**. Each of them described his life according to his own Mystery traditions. And if the narratives of the first three Evangelists (the Synoptists) resemble each other, it proves nothing more than that they drew upon similar Mystery traditions. The fourth Evangelist saturated his Gospel with ideas in many respects reminiscent of the religious philosopher Philo (see Note in Chapter 4). This simply proves that he was rooted in the same mystical tradition as was Philo. — In the Gospels one finds various elements. First, facts are related which appear to lay claim to being historical. Second, parables exist in which the narrative form is used only to portray a deeper truth. And third, teachings meant to be taken as the content of the Christian conception of life, are included. In John's Gospel no actual parable is present. The source from which he drew was a mystical school which believed parables to be

unnecessary. — The role of professedly historical facts and parables in the first three Gospels is clearly shown in the account of the cursing of the fig tree. In Mark 11:11–14 we read: “And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves; for the time of the figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.” In the corresponding passage in Luke’s Gospel he relates a parable (Luke 13:6, 7): “He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came and sought fruit thereon and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” This parable symbolizes the worthlessness of the old teaching, represented by the barren fig tree. What is meant metaphorically, Mark relates as an apparently historical fact. Therefore we may assume that, in general, **facts related in the Gospels are not to be taken as only historical, or as if they were to hold good only in the world of the senses, but as mystical facts, as experiences recognizable only by spiritual vision, and which stem from various mystical traditions.** If we admit this, the difference between the Gospel of John and the Synoptists ceases to exist. **For mystical interpretation, [textual/historical] research should not be [accounted authoritative].** Even if one or the other Gospel were written a few decades earlier or later, **to the mystic all of them are of equal historical worth, John’s Gospel as well as the others.**

The “miracles” also do not present the least difficulty when interpreted mystically. They **are supposed to break through the laws of nature.** They [only appear to do this] when they are considered [merely] as occurrences which [ordinarily take place] in the physical, transitory sphere [and so considered] in such a way that ordinary sense-perception could have [explained] them without difficulty. But if they are **experiences which can be [comprehended] only at a higher level, the spiritual level of existence,** then it is a matter of course that **they cannot be [explained according to] the laws of physical nature.**

Another way to approach this question is for scientists and Bible scholars to admit that Newtonian natural laws cannot (never did and never will) explain everything, just as quantum physics and astrophysics and genetics have most recently established. We must set aside obsolete conceptions of particle physics, closed system causation and empiricism in order even to begin further investigation of the cosmos. What appeared then as miracle, and may now appear as miracle, is presented as proof; it is intended as a signal or reminder that sense-perception embraces only a part of reality and then only one set of appearances rather than direct apprehension of truth. Such apprehension requires another, “higher” (meaning metaphysically-

tuned) set of senses. Then the 'miraculous' becomes explainable per encompassing laws of spiritual --not only material-- nature.

Thus it is **first of all necessary to read the Gospels in the right way**: then we shall know in what manner they speak of the Founder of Christianity. Their intention is to report in the style in which communications were made through the Mysteries. **They narrate in the way a mystic would speak of an initiate.** However, they give the initiation as the unique characteristic of one unique Being. **And they make the salvation of humanity depend on the fact that men cleave to this uniquely initiated Being.** What had come to the initiates was the "Kingdom of God." This unique Being has brought the Kingdom to all who will cleave to him. **What was formerly the personal concern of each individual [initiate] has become the common concern of all those willing [simply] to acknowledge Jesus as their Lord.**

We can understand how this came about if we admit that the wisdom of the Mysteries was embedded in the religion of the Israelite people. Christianity arose out of Judaism. We need not be surprised therefore to **find engrafted on Judaism together with Christianity, those Mystery-conceptions which we have seen to be the common property of Greek and Egyptian spiritual life.** If we examine folk religions we find various ideas about the spiritual. If we **trace back to the deeper wisdom of the priests**, which in each case proves to be the spiritual nucleus of the differing folk religions, **we find agreement everywhere.** Plato is aware that he agrees with the priest-sages of Egypt as he sets forth the main content of Greek wisdom in his philosophical conception of the world. It is said that Pythagoras traveled to Egypt and India and was instructed by the sages in those countries. **Thinkers who lived in the earlier days of Christianity found so much agreement between the philosophical teachings of Plato and the deeper meaning of Moses' writings that they called Plato the Moses of the Greek tongue.** (see Note 63)

Thus **Mystery wisdom existed everywhere. In Judaism it acquired the form it had to assume if it was to become a world religion. — Judaism awaited the Messiah.** It is not surprising that when the personality of a unique initiate appeared, the Jews could only conceive of him as being the Messiah. Indeed, **this circumstance sheds light on the fact that what had been an individual concern in the Mysteries became the concern of a whole people.** From the beginning the Jewish religion had been a religion of the people. The Jewish people regarded itself as one organism. Its God was the God of the whole people. If the Son of this God were to be born he must be the Redeemer of the whole people. **The individual [Jewish] mystic was not permitted to be saved by himself; the whole people must share in the redemption. Thus it is rooted in the fundamental ideas of the Jewish religion that One is to die for all.** (see Note 64) — And it is also certain that there were Mysteries in Judaism which could be brought into the religion of the people, out of the dimness of a secret cult. A fully developed mysticism existed side by side with the priestly wisdom connected with the outer formulas of the

Pharisees. This secret Mystery wisdom is described in the same way among the Jews as it is elsewhere. One day when an initiate was speaking of it, his hearers sensed the secret meaning of his words and said, Old man, what hast thou done? O that thou hadst kept silence! Thou thinkest to navigate the boundless ocean without sail or mast. This what thou art attempting. Wilt thou fly upwards? Thou canst not. Wilt thou descend into the depths? An infinite abyss is yawning before thee. — The Kabbalists, from whom the above is taken, also speak of four rabbis. These four rabbis sought the secret path to the divine. The first died, the second lost his reason, the third caused tremendous desolation, and only the fourth, Rabbi Akiba, entered and returned in peace. (see Note 65)

Thus we see that also **in Judaism** there was a soil in which **an initiate of a unique kind could develop**. He needed only say to himself: I will not let salvation be limited to a few chosen people. I will let all people participate in this salvation. **He had to carry out into the world at large what the elect had experienced in the temples of the Mysteries**. He had to be willing to take it upon himself, through his personality, in spirit, to be to his community what the cult of the Mysteries hitherto had been to those who took part in it. Indeed he could not at once give the experiences of the Mysteries to the whole community. Neither would he have wished to do so. But he wished to give to all the certainty of what in the Mysteries was perceived to be truth. He wished to cause the life which flowed in the Mysteries to flow through the further historical evolution of humanity. Thus **he would raise mankind to a higher stage of existence**. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe.” He wished **to plant unshakably in human hearts, in the form of faith, the certainty that the divine really exists**. A man who stands outside initiation and has this faith certainly will go further than one who is without [faith]. It must have weighed on the heart of Jesus like a nightmare that among those standing outside there may have been many unable to find the way. He wished **to lessen the gulf between those [chosen] to be initiated and the “people.” Christianity was to be a means by which everyone could find the way**. If anyone is not yet ready, at least he is not cut off from the possibility of sharing, to a certain degree unconsciously, in the stream flowing through the Mysteries. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” **Even those who cannot yet participate in initiation may enjoy some of the fruits of the Mysteries. Henceforth the Kingdom of God is not dependent on “external observances”**: “Neither shall they say Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” **With Jesus the point in question was not so much how far this or that person advanced in the kingdom of the spirit, as that all should be convinced that such a spiritual kingdom exists**. “In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” That is, **have faith [for now] in the divine; the time will come when you will [actually] find it**.

The Miracle of the Raising of Lazarus

THERE IS NO DOUBT that among the “miracles” attributed to Jesus very special importance must be attached to the raising of Lazarus at Bethany. Everything unites in assigning a prominent position in the New Testament to what the Evangelist relates at this point. One must recall that it is related only by John, who claims a very definite interpretation for his Gospel by the significant words with which it opens. John begins with the sentences: “In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God, and the Word was a God ... And the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, a glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Anyone who places such words at the beginning of his exposition is plainly indicating that he wishes it to be interpreted in an especially profound sense. Anyone who approaches it with merely intellectual explanations, or otherwise in a superficial way, is like the person who thinks that Othello “really” murders Desdemona on the stage. Then **what does John wish to convey by his introductory words?** He clearly states that **he is speaking of something eternal, which existed at the very beginning.** He relates facts, but they should not be accepted as the kind of facts which eye and ear consider, and upon which logical reason exercises its art. Behind these facts he conceals the “Word” which exists in the cosmic spirit. **For him these facts are the medium through which a higher sense is manifested. And therefore we may assume that in the raising of a man from the dead, a fact which offers the greatest difficulties to the eye, ear and logical reason, is concealed the deepest meaning of all.**

Here again, the prior chapter must be understood to preface this. The reader is expected to set aside doubts about what is physically possible and suspend judgment as to the admissibility of miracles. Thereby even the ‘nonbeliever’ may consider a deeper truth in its own right. Even physical scientists are obligated to make such a leap, suspending their own disbelief when an observation appears to violate the previously understood laws of nature. Were that not so, genetics and quantum mechanics would never have advanced beyond the most generalized hypotheses. Even Einstein recognized his “biggest blunder” in his initial reluctance to believe and embrace his own theories of relativity, simply because they appeared to defy common sense. Copernicus and Magellan likewise struggled to persuade contemporaries that accepted constructs of reality must first yield to courageous child-like belief in a wider set of possibilities in the quest for truth. Mere ‘facts’ as natural laws may successfully describe and predict how things will behave, while yet blinding one’s understanding to what is really there or not.

Something further must be added here. **In his *Life of Jesus*, Renan indicated that the raising of Lazarus undoubtedly had a decisive influence on the end of Jesus’ life.** (see Note 65a) **[Though from] the standpoint Renan takes [prior],**

such a [conclusion would appear to be] impossible. The belief was being circulated among the people that Jesus had raised a man from the dead; why should this fact appear so dangerous to his opponents that they asked the decisive question: Can Jesus and Judaism live side by side? It will not do to assert with Renan: “The other miracles of Jesus were passing events, repeated in good faith and exaggerated by popular report; they were thought no more of after they had happened. But this one was a real event, publicly known, by means of which it was sought to silence the Pharisees. All the enemies of Jesus were angered by the sensation it caused. It is related that they tried to kill Lazarus.” It is incomprehensible why this should be so if Renan was right in his belief that all that occurred at Bethany was a mock scene intended to strengthen belief in Jesus — “Perhaps Lazarus, still pale from his illness, had himself wrapped in a shroud and laid in the family tomb. These tombs were large rooms hewn out of the rock and entered by a square opening, closed by an immense stone slab. Martha and Mary hurried to meet Jesus and brought him to the tomb before he entered Bethany. The painful emotion felt by Jesus at the tomb of the friend he believed dead (John 11:33–38) might be taken by those present for the agitation and tremors which usually accompanied miracles. It was a popular belief indeed that the divine virtue in a man was epileptic and convulsive in character. To continue the above hypothesis, Jesus wished to see once more the man he had loved, and when the stone had been rolled away, Lazarus came forth in his shroud, his head bound with a napkin. Naturally, this phenomenon was regarded by everyone as a resurrection. **Faith knows no other law than what it considers to be true.” Does not such an explanation appear absolutely naïve** when Renan adds the following view: “Certain indications indeed seem to suggest that causes arising in Bethany helped to hasten Jesus' death”? Nevertheless a true feeling undoubtedly underlies this last statement by Renan. But **with the means at his disposal, Renan cannot explain or justify this feeling.**

In other words, the positivistic critic wants it both ways. So, the miracles of Jesus were merely the art of a charlatan, and the people's support was doomed to die once everyone realized, as did Jewish leaders, its passing entertainment appeal. Okay then, what made this additional trick such a threat, indeed the deciding factor in their condemning Jesus to death? In this event, Jesus had somehow crossed the line in defiance of their authority.

This man was either a clown or serious rival. As C S Lewis put it --at best a crazy liar and more likely a demon, or else Jesus was the true Christ as he maintained-- it can't be both.

Something of quite special importance must have been done by Jesus at Bethany to justify the following words in reference to it: “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, What do we? for this man performs many signs.” (John 11:47) Renan also surmises something special: “It must be acknowledged that John's account is essentially different from the reports of miracles of which the Synoptists are full, and which are the fruit of popular

imagination. Let us add that John is the only Evangelist with accurate knowledge of the relationship of Jesus with the family at Bethany, and that it would be incomprehensible how a creation of the popular mind could have been inserted in the frame of such personal reminiscences. Therefore it is probable that the miracle in question was not among the entirely legendary ones for which no one is responsible. In other words, I think that something happened at Bethany which was looked upon as a resurrection.” Does not this really mean that **something happened at Bethany which Renan cannot explain**? He entrenches himself behind the words: “At this distance of time, and with only one text bearing obvious traces of subsequent additions, it is impossible to decide whether, in the present case, all is fiction, or whether a real incident at Bethany served as a basis for the rumor.” — Are we not dealing here with something which need only be read in the right way to be truly understood? Then perhaps **we should stop speaking of “fiction.”**

It must be admitted that **the whole account in John's Gospel is wrapped in a veil of mystery**. To gain insight into this we need only demonstrate one point. If the report is to be taken in a literal, physical sense, how are we to **understand these words of Jesus: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”**? (John 11:4). This is the customary translation of the words, but the situation would be better realized if we were to translate them thus — as would be correct according to the Greek also: **“for the manifestation (revelation) of God, that the Son of God might be revealed thereby.”** And what do these other words mean: Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live”? (John 11:25) It would be trivial to believe that Jesus wished to say that Lazarus had become ill only in order that Jesus might demonstrate his skill through him. And it would be a further triviality to think that Jesus meant to assert that belief in him restores life to someone who is dead in the ordinary sense of the word. For **what would be remarkable about a person raised from the dead, if after his resurrection he was the same [mortal] as before death?** Indeed, **what would be the sense of describing the life of such a person in the words: “I am the resurrection and the life”?** The words of Jesus at once come to life and make sense when we **understand them as the expression of a spiritual occurrence**, and then even take them in a certain way literally as they stand in the text. **Jesus actually says that he is the resurrection that has happened to Lazarus, and that he is the life that Lazarus is living.** Let us take literally what Jesus is according to the Gospel of John. He is the “Word that became flesh.” He is the eternal that existed in the beginning. **If he is really the resurrection, then the “eternal, primordial” has risen again in Lazarus. We are dealing therefore with the resurrection of the eternal “Word.” And this “Word” is the life to which Lazarus has been awakened. We have to do with a case of “illness.” But it is not an illness leading to death, but to the “glory of God,” that is, to the revelation of God.** If the “eternal Word” has risen again in Lazarus then in truth the whole process serves to make God manifest in Lazarus. For through the whole process **Lazarus has become another man.** The “Word,” the Spirit, did not live in him before; now this

Spirit lives in him. This **Spirit has been born in him**. It is true that every birth is accompanied by an illness, the illness of the mother. But this illness does not lead to death, but to new life. That part of Lazarus becomes “ill” from which the “new man,” permeated by the “Word,” is born.

Where is the tomb from which the “Word” is born? To answer this question we need only remember Plato, who calls man's body the tomb of the soul. (see Note 66) And we need only recall that Plato also speaks of a kind of resurrection when he refers to the coming to life of the spiritual world in the body. **What Plato calls the spiritual soul, John calls the “Word.” And for him Christ is the “Word.”** Plato might have said, **Whoever becomes spiritual has caused the divine to rise from the tomb of his body. And for John this resurrection is what happened through the “Life of Jesus.”** It is no wonder then that he causes Jesus to say, “I am the resurrection.”

The tomb of terminal material bodyhood is redeemed to become instead the womb of a new enduring spiritual corporeality. And Jesus is the Christ, the resurrection Life who makes this transformation possible. That is classic fundamental Christianity. Whatever is to be said of Steiner's worldview, it is not merely Neo-gnosticism or another New Age cult.

There can be **no doubt that the event at Bethany was an awakening in a spiritual sense. Lazarus became a different person.** He was raised to a life of which the “eternal Word” proclaims: “I am this life.” What, then, took place in Lazarus? **The Spirit came to life within him. He partook of the life which is eternal.** — We need only express his experience of resurrection in the words of those who were initiated into the Mysteries, and at once the meaning becomes clear. What does Plutarch say (see Note in Chapter 2) about the purpose of the Mysteries? They were designed to enable the soul to withdraw from bodily life and unite with the gods. Schelling describes the feelings of an initiate thus: “The initiate, through the rites which he received, became a link in the magic chain; he himself became a Cabeiri. (See Author's Comments) He was received into the indestructible relationship, joining the army of the higher gods, as ancient inscriptions express it.” (Schelling, (see Note 66a) *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Philosophy of Revelation) And the change that took place in the life of a person who had received the rites of the Mysteries cannot be more significantly described than in the words spoken by Aedesius to his disciple, the Emperor Constantine: “If one day you should partake in the Mysteries, you will feel ashamed of having been born only as a man.” (see Note 66b)

Let us saturate our souls with such feelings, and then we shall gain the right relationship to the occurrence at Bethany. We shall then experience something quite special in the narrative of John. A certainty will dawn upon us which no logical interpretation, no attempt at rational explanation, can give. **A mystery in the true**

sense of the word stands before us. Into Lazarus the “eternal Word” has entered. In the language of the Mysteries, he became an initiate (see Note in Chapter 2) Thus the event related to us must be an act of initiation.

Let us now place the whole event before ourselves as an initiation. Jesus loved Lazarus (John 11:36). This indicates no ordinary affection. The latter would be contrary to the spirit of John's Gospel, in which Jesus is the “Word.” **Jesus loved Lazarus because he found him ready for the awakening of the “Word” within him.** Jesus was connected with the family at Bethany. This simply means that Jesus had prepared everything in that family for the great final act of the drama: the raising of Lazarus. **Lazarus was the pupil of Jesus. He was a pupil of such caliber that Jesus could be quite certain that the awakening would be accomplished in him. The final act of the drama of awakening was a pictorial action revealing the Spirit.** The person involved in it not only had to understand the words, “Die and come to life,” (see Note 67) he had to fulfill them himself by a spiritually real action. His earthly part, of which his higher being in the sense of the Mysteries must be ashamed, had to be laid aside. **The earthly part had to die a pictorially real death.** The fact that **his body was then put into a somnambulistic sleep for three days** can only be regarded, in contrast to the immensity of the transformation of life which preceded it, as an external event to which a far more significant spiritual one corresponds. This act, however, was indeed also **the experience which divided the life of the mystic into two parts.**

The ‘accidental’ initiation rendered via ASP has the same effect. One feels that he lives a dual existence --before and after, over there and back again, that side and this side; truly a kind of rebirth of self-identity as both a temporal person destined to die and an immortal spirit in parallel. We have discovered what it is to know and be known apart from this destructible body. And for many this is realized before having acknowledged the prime initiator, the blazing pioneer of this resurrection consciousness. After all, God sends life-giving rain and sunshine to fall upon the just and unjust --in the beginning stages of grace.

One who does not know from experience the deeper content of such acts cannot understand them. He can only appreciate them by means of a comparison. The substance of Shakespeare's Hamlet may be condensed into a few words. Anyone who learns these words can say in a certain sense that he knows the content of Hamlet. And intellectually he does. But someone who allows all the wealth of Shakespeare's drama to stream in upon him perceives Hamlet quite differently. The content of a life, which cannot be replaced by a mere description, has passed through his soul. The idea of Hamlet has become an artistic, personal experience within him. — On a higher level a similar process is accomplished in man through the magic, significant process of initiation. **What he attains spiritually he lives through pictorially.** The word “pictorially” is used here in the sense that **while an**

outer event is really accomplished materially, at the same time it is nevertheless a picture. We are not dealing with an unreal, but with a **real picture.** **The earthly body has actually been dead for three days. From death comes forth the new life.** This life has outlasted death. Man has acquired faith in the new life. — This is what happened with Lazarus. **Jesus had prepared him for the awakening.** He experienced a pictorially real illness. The latter is **an initiation, which after three days leads to a really new life** (See footnote).

Lazarus was ready to accomplish this act. He wrapped himself in the robe of the mystic. He enclosed himself in a condition of lifelessness which was at the same time a pictorial death. And when Jesus came there, the three days had been fulfilled. “Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, ‘Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.’” (John 11:41.) The Father had heard Jesus, for Lazarus had come to the final act of the great drama of cognition. He had perceived how resurrection is attained. **An initiation into the Mysteries had been fulfilled.**

It was an initiation such as had been understood throughout the ages. **It had been demonstrated by Jesus as the initiator. Union with the divine had always been represented in this manner.**

In Lazarus Jesus accomplished the great miracle of the transformation of life in the sense of ancient traditions. **Through this event Christianity is linked with the Mysteries.** Lazarus had become an initiate through Christ Jesus himself. Thereby **Lazarus had become able to rise into the higher worlds.** He was at the same time **both the first Christian initiate and the first to be initiated by Christ Jesus himself.** Through his initiation he had become capable of perceiving that the “Word” which had come to life within him had become a person in Christ Jesus, and thus there stood before him in the personality of his “awakener” the same which had been revealed within him spiritually. — From this point of view the following words of Jesus are significant: “And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John 11:42) That is to say, it is a question of revealing that in Jesus the “Son of the Father” lives in such a way that when he awakens his own being in man, man becomes a mystic. In this way Jesus made it plain that the meaning of life lay hidden in the Mysteries, and that they paved the way to this meaning. **He is the living Word; in him was personified what had become ancient tradition.** And the Evangelist is justified in expressing this in the sentence: In him the Word became flesh. He rightly sees in Jesus himself an incarnated mystery. And because of this, John's Gospel is a mystery. In order to read it rightly we must bear in mind that the facts are spiritual facts. **If a priest of an ancient order had written it, he would have described traditional rites. For John, these rites took the form of a person. They became the “Life of Jesus.”** Burckhardt, (see Note 67a) an eminent modern investigator of the Mysteries, in *Die Zeit Konstantins, The Time of Constantine*, says that they are “matters about which we shall never be clear,” but this is simply because he has not perceived the way to this clarity. If we examine

the Gospel of John and behold in the sphere of pictorially physical reality the drama, of cognition enacted by the ancients, we are looking upon the Mystery itself.

In the words “Lazarus, come forth,” we can recognize the call by which the Egyptian priest-initiators summoned back to everyday life those who had subjected themselves to the processes of “initiation,” which withdrew them from the world that they might die to earthly things and gain a conviction of the reality of the eternal. But with these words Jesus had revealed the secret of the Mysteries. It is easy to understand that **the Jews could not let such an act go unpunished**, any more than the Greeks could have refrained from punishing Aeschylus, had he betrayed the secrets of the Mysteries. For Jesus the main point in the initiation of Lazarus was to represent before all “the people which stand by,” **an event which, according to ancient priestly wisdom, might be accomplished only in the secrecy of the Mysteries.** The **initiation of Lazarus was to prepare the way for the understanding of the “Mystery of Golgotha.”** Previously only those who “saw” — that is to say, who were initiated — were able to know something of what was achieved by initiation; but **now a conviction of the secrets of higher worlds could also be gained by those who “have not seen and yet have believed.”**

Many ASP initiates ‘believed’ prior to their experience that a world of spirit exists independent of the material world. And some continue to resist such belief, even having seen firsthand what is there to see and hear without the agency of physical eyes and ears. They choose unbelief, via some of the boldest gymnastics of human reason imaginable. Unbelief remains their comfort and their refuge against any idea or admission of things spiritual; least of all that one may be primarily a nonmaterial entity subject to the scrutiny of a godly Creator.

And so, the black dwarves of Narnia, having already passed the threshold into Aslan's Country, kept insisting that nothing on that side could be real. So, there they sat truly unable to see or move or even taste the food, rendered blind and paralyzed, hungry and incurably unsatisfied by their own unbelief.

Belief creates conceptual categories for new percepts, thereby equipping the mind to name and grasp the reality of that which was previously unseeable. And sometimes, inadequate categories yet present their labels as temporary substitutes for the truth, allowing the experiencer some limited mobility. The dwarves could hear and recognize voices of others recently passed there from Narnia. But they ever accused those others of deception who believed and so could see, even taste, that this new country was real. In order to pass “further up

and further in”, the seers had first finally to abandon the dwarves (reluctantly as comrades) to their wretched unbelief.

The Apocalypse of John

AT THE END of the New Testament stands a remarkable document, the Apocalypse, the secret revelation of Saint John. We need only read the opening words to feel the esoteric character of this book. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God granted him, to show to his servants how the necessary events will shortly run their course; this is sent in signs by the angel of God to his servant John.” (see Note 68) **What is revealed here is “sent in signs.” Therefore we must not take the literal sense of the words as they stand, but seek for a deeper sense**, of which the words are only signs. But there are also many other things which point to such a “secret meaning.” John addresses himself to seven communities in Asia. This cannot mean actual, material communities. For **the number seven is the sacred symbolic number** which must be chosen because of its symbolic meaning. The actual number of the Asiatic communities would have been different. And its esoteric character is further indicated by the manner in which John arrived at the revelation: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a voice like a trumpet, saying; What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven communities.” Therefore we are dealing with **a revelation received by John in the Spirit**. And it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. **What became revealed to the world through Christ Jesus appears in an esoteric form**. Such an esoteric sense therefore must be sought in the teaching of Christ. This revelation **bears the same relationship to ordinary Christianity as the revelation of the Mysteries in pre-Christian times bore to the folk religion**. Hence the attempt to treat this Apocalypse as a Mystery appears justified.

The Apocalypse is addressed to seven communities. What does this mean? We need only single out one of the messages to perceive the sense. In the first of these is said: “Write to the angel of the community of Ephesus: The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lights. I know your deeds and what you have suffered and also your patient endurance, and that you will not support those who are evil, and that you have called to account those who call themselves apostles, and are not, and that you have recognized them as false. And you are enduring patiently and building up your work upon my name, and you have not grown weary of it. But I demand from you that you should attain to your highest love. Realize then from what you have fallen, change your thinking and accomplish the highest deeds. If you do not, I will come and move your light from its place, unless you change your thinking. But this you have, that you despise the deeds of the Nicolaitians, which I also despise. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the communities: To him who is victorious I will give food of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.” (Rev. 2:1–7) — This is the message addressed to the angel of the first community. **The angel, who represents the spirit of his community**, has entered upon the path marked out by Christianity. He is able to distinguish between the false adherents of

Christianity and the true. He wishes to be Christian, and has founded his work on the name of Christ. But it is required of him that he should not bar his own way to the highest love by errors of any kind. He is shown the possibility of taking a wrong course through such errors. **Through Christ Jesus the path toward attainment of the divine has been marked out.** Patient endurance is needed for further advancement in the sense of the first impulse. It is possible to believe too soon that one has grasped the right sense. This happens if someone allows himself to be led part of the way by Christ and then, after all, leaves this leadership **by surrendering himself to false ideas** about it. Thereby **he relapses into his lower self. He has left the “first love.”** The knowledge arising out of material perception may be raised into a higher sphere, becoming wisdom by being spiritualized and made divine. If it does not reach this height, it remains among transitory things. Christ Jesus has pointed out the path to the Eternal. **With unwearied, patient endurance knowledge must follow the path leading to its apotheosis. Lovingly it must follow the steps which transform it into wisdom.** The Nicolaitians were a sect who took Christianity too lightly. They saw but one thing: Christ is the divine Word, the eternal wisdom which will be born in man. Therefore they concluded that human wisdom is the divine Word. Hence it follows that one need only pursue human knowledge in order to realize the divine in the world. But the meaning of Christian wisdom cannot be construed thus. The knowledge which begins as human wisdom is as transitory as anything else unless it is changed into divine wisdom. You are not thus, says the “Spirit” to the angel of Ephesus; you have not relied merely upon human wisdom. You have trodden the Christian path with patient endurance. But you must not believe that the very highest love is not needed **to attain this goal.** For this **a love is necessary which far surpasses all love for other things. Only this is the “highest love.”** The path to the divine is an infinite one, and it must be understood that when the first stage has been reached it can be only the preparation for ascending to ever higher stages. In this way, through the first of the messages is shown how they should be interpreted. The sense of the others can be found in a similar manner.

John turned and saw “seven golden lights,” and “in the midst of the lights the image of the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his loins; his head and his hair were gleaming white like wool or snow, and his eyes were sparkling in the fire.” We are told (Rev.1:20) that **“the seven lights are the seven communities.”** This means that the lights are **seven different ways of attaining to the divine.** All of them are **more or less imperfect.** And the Son of Man “had seven stars in his right hand” (verse 16). “The seven stars are the angels of the seven communities” (verse 20). Here **the “guiding spirits” (daemons) of the wisdom of the Mysteries have become the guiding angels of the [Christian] “communities.”** These communities are represented as bodies for spiritual beings. And the angels are the souls of these “bodies,” just as human souls are the guiding powers of human bodies. The communities are the paths to the divine in the imperfect, and the souls of the communities should become guides along these paths. For this purpose they themselves must grow in such a way that their leader is the being who has the “seven stars” in his right hand. “And out of his mouth issued

a two-edged sharp sword, and his countenance in its glory was like the shining sun.” **In the Mysteries** this sword is also found. **The neophyte was terrified by a “drawn sword.”** This indicates the situation of one wishing to know the divine by experience, so that the “countenance” of wisdom may “shine upon him with a glory like the sun.” Through this experience John also goes. It is to be **a test of his strength**. “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me and said: Do not be terrified” (verse 17). **The neophyte must go through experiences which otherwise come to man only when he goes through death. His guide must lead him beyond the region where birth and death have meaning.**

Yes, the typical ASP subject suspects and often believes that he has physically died. I can't be sure that it is just like a human spirit's surprise or dismay at finding himself cognizant after death. But logic suggests that it is bound to be similar, at least. I certainly don't fear death in the same way I would otherwise. I don't view the death of others as the final chapter of their experience. I find myself continuing to pray for their souls, for a peaceful transition.

The initiate enters upon a new life, “and I was dead, and behold, I became alive throughout the cycles of life; and I have the keys of Death and the Realm of the Dead.” — Thus prepared, John is lead onward in order to learn the secrets of existence. “After this I looked, and behold, the door to heaven was opened, and the first voice which became audible sounded to me like a trumpet, and said Come up hither, and I will show you what will happen after this.” The messages of **the seven spirits of the communities announce to John what is to occur in the material, physical world in order to prepare the way for Christianity**; what he now sees “in the Spirit” leads him to the spiritual, primal source of things, hidden behind physical evolution, but which will be realized in a spiritualized age in the near future by means of physical evolution. The initiate experiences now in the Spirit what is to happen in the future. “And immediately I was withdrawn into the realm of Spirit. And I beheld a throne in heaven, and one seated on the throne. And he who sat there appeared like the jasper and carnelian stone; and a rainbow surrounded the throne that looked like an emerald.” In this way **the primal source of the material world is described in the pictures in which it clothes itself for the seer.** “And in the sphere around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated upon the twenty-four thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white flowing garments, and with golden crowns upon their heads.” (chapter 4, verses 1, 2) — **Beings far advanced upon the path of wisdom** thus surround the primal source of existence, to gaze on its infinite essence and to bear testimony to it. “And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second like a bull, the third looked like a human being, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. And each of the four living creatures had six wings, full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to proclaim: Holy, holy, holy, the God,

the Almighty, who was, and is, and is to be.” It is not difficult to perceive that **the four beasts represent the supersensible life underlying the forms of life presented by the material world**. Afterward, when the trumpets sound, they raise their voices, that is, when the life expressed in material forms has been transmuted into spiritual life.

In the right hand of him who sits on the throne is **the scroll in which the path to the highest wisdom is marked out** (chapter 5, verse 1). **Only one is worthy to open the scroll**. “Behold the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” The scroll has seven seals (See Author's Comments). The wisdom of man is sevenfold. That it is designated as being sevenfold is again connected with the sacred character of the number seven. **The mystical wisdom of Plato designates as seals the eternal cosmic thoughts which come to expression [as material things or events]**. (see Note 69) Human wisdom seeks for these creative thoughts. But only the scroll which is sealed with them, contains the divine truth. The fundamental thoughts of creation must first be unveiled, **the seals must be opened, before what is in the scroll can be revealed. Jesus, the Lion, has power to open the seals**. He has given a direction to the great creative thoughts which, through them, leads to wisdom. — The Lamb who was strangled and sacrificed his blood for God; Jesus, who bore Christ in himself and who thus, **in the highest sense, passed through the Mystery of life and death**, opens the scroll (chapter 5, verses 9–10). And **as each seal is opened (chapter 6) the four living creatures declare what they know**. At the opening of the first seal **a white horse** upon which sits a rider with a bow (See Author's Comments), appears to John. The **first cosmic power**, an embodiment of creative thought, becomes visible. It is directed into the right course by the **new rider, Christianity. Strife is quieted by the new faith**. At the opening of the second seal **a red horse** appears, on which again there is a rider. **He takes peace, the second cosmic power, from the earth** so that through sloth humanity may not neglect to cultivate the divine. The opening of the **third seal reveals the cosmic power of justice**, guided by Christianity; the **fourth brings the power of religion**, which has received new dignity through Christianity. — The meaning of the four living creatures thus becomes clear. They are **the four chief cosmic powers which are to receive new leadership through Christianity**, War: the lion; Peaceful Work: the bull; Justice: the being with the human face; and Religious Enthusiasm: the eagle. The meaning of the third being becomes clear when it is said at the opening of the third seal: “A quart of wheat for a shilling, and three quarts of barley for a shilling,” and that the rider holds a balance. At the opening of the fourth seal a rider becomes visible whose name was “Death, and Hell followed him.” Religious justice is the rider (chapter 6, verses 6 and 7).

And when **the fifth seal** is opened there appear the souls of those who have already acted in the spirit of Christianity. Creative thought itself, embodied in Christianity, is manifested here. But by this Christianity is at first meant only **the first community of Christians, which is transitory** like other forms of creation. The **sixth seal** is opened (chapter 7), it is evident that the spiritual world of Christianity

is an eternal world. The people seem to be permeated by that spiritual world out of which Christianity itself proceeded. What it has itself created becomes sanctified. “And I heard the number of the sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand who were sealed of all the tribes of the children of Israel” (chapter 7, verse 4). They are **those who prepared for the eternal before Christianity existed, and who were transformed by the Christ impulse**. The opening of the **seventh seal** follows. What true Christianity should mean for the world becomes evident. **The seven angels who “stand before God”** (chapter 8, verse 2) appear. Again these angels are **spirits from the ancient Mystery-conceptions transferred to Christianity**.

Steiner's position is clearly that all human religious and mystery systems realize their significance and ultimately their fulfillment in Christianity, just as Jesus said also regarding the Judaic Law and Prophets. People will often declare that all roads lead to God. Though one thing is certain, that all creatures will stand in Judgment before their Creator --it is more accurate to admit that all human ideologies may serve to lead true seekers to Christianity, and thereby to God. This must be so, even were the seeker to be misled in identifying Christendom as Satan's domain --that is until the moment he finds himself standing with Christ before the Throne. Then God will recognize the heart seeking Truth, and Christ will embrace this ‘hidden’ brother, who in turn will acknowledge and welcome this undeserved Intercessor as the revealed single Hope of Life. He will discover himself now unveiled to be (like Apostle Paul) one appointed to choose God after all.

Every seeker must ultimately come to terms with Jesus' self-declaration: "I am THE Way, THE Truth and THE Life --no one come to the Father but by me." However, all one really needs is the first three words, I am THE --that universal article derived from its Greek root, meaning ‘God's own’ –Gospel Truth and Life hidden in the very structure of our language.

[These seven] are the spirits who lead to the vision of God in a truly Christian way. Therefore what is next accomplished is a leading to God; it is an “initiation” which is bestowed upon John. The announcements of the angels are **accompanied by the signs necessary at initiations**. “The first angel sounded and hail came out of fire mingled with blood, and it fell on the earth. And a third of the earth was burnt up, also a third of the trees was burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up.” And similar things happen at the announcements of the other angels when they sound their trumpets. — At this point we see **we are not dealing with an initiation in the old sense but with a new one which should take the place of the old. Christianity should not be confined, like the ancient Mysteries, to a few elect. It should belong to the whole of humanity. It should be a religion of**

the people; the truth should be given to each one who “has ears to hear.” The ancient mystics were singled out from a great number; the trumpets of Christianity sound for every one who is willing to hear them. Whether or not he draws near, depends upon himself. This is why the terrors accompanying this initiation of humanity are so enormously enhanced. What is to become of the earth and its inhabitants in a distant future is revealed to John at his initiation. Underlying this is the thought that **initiates are able to foresee in the higher worlds what is realized only in the future for the lower world. The seven messages represent the meaning of Christianity for the present age; the seven seals represent what is now being prepared for the future through Christianity.** The future is veiled, sealed to the uninitiated; in initiation it is unsealed. **When the earthly period is over,** during which the seven messages hold good, **a more spiritual time will begin.** Then life will no longer flow on as it appears in physical shapes, but even outwardly it will be a copy of its supersensible forms. These latter are represented by the four animals and the other images contained in the seals. In a yet more distant future appears that form of the earth which the initiate experiences through the trumpets. Thus the initiate prophetically experiences what is to happen. And one who is initiated in the Christian sense experiences how the Christ impulse penetrates and continues to work in earthly life. And after it has been shown how **everything that clings too closely to the transitory to attain true Christianity has met with death,** there appears the mighty angel with a little scroll open in his hand, and which he gives to John (chapter 10, verse 9): “And he said to me Take it, and eat: it will be bitter to your stomach but sweet in your mouth like honey.” John was not only to read the little scroll; he was to absorb it, letting its contents permeate him. What avails any cognition unless man is vitally and thoroughly permeated by it? Wisdom should become life; man should not merely perceive the divine, but become divine himself. Such **wisdom as is written in the scroll no doubt causes pain to the transitory nature: “it will be bitter to your stomach;”** but so much the more does it make the eternal part happy: “but it will be sweet in your mouth like honey.” — **Only through such an initiation can Christianity become actual on the earth. It kills everything belonging to the lower nature.** “And their dead bodies will lie in the square of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Christ was crucified.” This refers to **the believers in Christ. They will be mistreated by the powers of the transitory world.** But it is only the transitory members of human nature that will be ill treated, which the true essence will then have conquered. Thereby their destiny is a copy of the exemplary fate of Christ Jesus. **Spiritually, “Sodom and Egypt” is the symbol of a life which clings to the external and does not change itself through the Christ impulse. Christ is everywhere crucified in the lower nature. Where this lower nature conquers, everything remains dead.** Human corpses cover the squares of the cities. **Those who overcome the lower nature and bring about an awakening of the crucified Christ, hear the trumpet of the seventh angel:** “The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign from cosmic age to cosmic age” (chapter 11, verse 15). “And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple” (verse 9). In the conception of these events **the initiate sees the old**

struggle between the lower and higher nature renewed. For everything the neophyte formerly had to go through must be repeated in the one who follows the Christian path. As once Osiris was threatened by the evil Typhon, so now the “great Dragon, the old Serpent” (chapter 12, verse 9) must be overcome. **The woman, the human soul, gives birth to lower knowledge, which is an adverse power if it does not raise itself to wisdom. Man must pass through that lower knowledge. Here in the Apocalypse it appears as the “old Serpent.”** In all mystical wisdom from the remotest times the serpent has been the symbol of cognition. **Man may be led astray by this serpent, by cognition, if he does not bring to life in him the Son of God who crushes the serpent's head.** “And the great Dragon was thrown out, that old Serpent, whose name is Devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world: he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (chapter 12, verse 9). In these words one can read what Christianity would be. A new method of initiation. In a new form was to be attained what had been attained in the Mysteries. In them also the serpent had to be overcome. But this was no longer to take place in the same way. The one, the archetypal Mystery, the **Christian Mystery, was to replace the many Mysteries of antiquity. Jesus, in whom the Logos became flesh, was to become the Initiator of the whole of humanity. And this humanity was to become his own community of mystics. Not a separation of the elect but a linking together of all is to occur.** Each is to be able to become a mystic according to his maturity. The message sounds forth to all; he who has an ear, hastens to learn the secrets. The voice of the heart is to decide in each individual case. **This or that person is not to be introduced individually into the Mystery temples, but the word is to be spoken to all; then some will be able to hear it more clearly than others. It will be left to the daemon, the angel within each human breast, to decide how far he can be initiated. The whole world is a Mystery temple.** Blessing is not only to come to those who see the wonderful processes in the special temples for initiation, processes which give them a guarantee of the eternal, but “Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe.” Even if at first they grope in the dark, nevertheless the light may come to them later. **Nothing is to be withheld from anyone; the way is to be open to all.** — The latter part of the Apocalypse describes graphically the dangers threatening Christianity through Antichristian powers, and how the Christian powers must be victorious nevertheless. All other gods are united in the One Christian Divinity: “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it: for the revelation of God lights it, and its light is the Lamb” (chapter 21, verse 23). **The mystery of the “Revelation of Saint John” is that the Mysteries shall no longer be kept hidden.**

Herein lies the primary theme of Steiner's teaching, indeed the Good News of Christianity and likewise the hope of those ‘accidentally’ initiated via ASP or other metaphysical experience.

“And he said to me: Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the Godhead is near.” — The author of the Apocalypse has set forth what he believes to be the relationship of his church to the churches of antiquity. He wished to express

what he thought about the Mysteries in the form of a spiritual Mystery. He wrote his Mystery on the island of Patmos. He is said to have received the “Revelation” in a grotto. These details indicate that the revelation was of the character of a Mystery. — **Thus Christianity emerged from the Mysteries.** In the Apocalypse its wisdom is itself born as a Mystery, but as a Mystery which transcends the frame of the old Mystery world. The unique Mystery is to become the universal Mystery. — It may appear contradictory to say that the secrets of the Mysteries became revealed through Christianity, and that nevertheless a Christian Mystery is to be seen again in the experience of the spiritual visions of the writer of the Apocalypse. The contradiction disappears at once when we reflect that **the secrets of the ancient Mysteries were revealed through the events in Palestine. Through these events was laid bare what previously had been veiled in the Mysteries.** A new Mystery has been introduced into the evolution of the world through the appearance of the Christ. **The initiate of ancient times experienced, in the spiritual world, how evolution points the way to the as yet “hidden Christ;” the Christian initiate experiences the hidden effects of the “revealed Christ.”**

Jesus and His Historical Background

THE SOIL OUT of which the spirit of Christianity grew is to be sought in the wisdom of the Mysteries. It was only necessary for the fundamental conviction to become widespread that this spirit must be introduced into life in a greater measure than had come to pass through the Mysteries themselves. But such a conviction was present in many circles. We need only look at the rule of life of the Essenes and Therapeutae who had been established long before the beginning of Christianity. **The Essenes** were a closed Palestinian sect, whose numbers at the time of Christ were estimated at four thousand. They **formed a community which required that its members should lead a life which developed a higher self within the soul, and through this bringing about a rebirth.** The novice was subjected to a strict test to ascertain whether he was sufficiently mature to prepare himself for a higher life. If he was admitted he had to undergo a period of probation. He was required to take a solemn oath that he would not betray to strangers the secrets of the discipline. The latter was designed to quell the lower nature in man so that the spirit slumbering within him might be awakened more and more. Whoever had experienced the spirit in himself up to a certain stage rose to a higher degree in the order and enjoyed a corresponding authority conditioned by fundamental convictions and not by external compulsion. — Similar to the Essenes were **the Therapeutae**, who lived in Egypt. All the relevant details of their discipline are contained in a treatise by the philosopher Philo, *About the Contemplative Life*. (see Note 70) (The dispute concerning the authenticity of this work must now be regarded as settled and it may be rightly assumed that Philo truly described the life of a community existing long before Christianity and well known to him. On this subject see G. R. S. Mead's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*.) We need look at only a few passages from Philo's treatise in order to see what their objective was. “The dwellings of the community are very simple, merely providing shelter against the two great dangers, — the fiery heat of the sun and the icy cold of the air. The

dwellings are not close together as are those in towns, for proximity is irksome and unpleasing to those who are seeking solitude; nor are they far apart, because of the fellowship which is so dear to them, and also for mutual help in case of an attack by brigands. In each dwelling is a consecrated room, called a sanctuary or monasterion (closet or cell) in which in solitude they are initiated into the mysteries of the sanctified life ... They also have works of ancient authors, the founders of their way of thinking, and who left behind them many details concerning the method used in allegorical interpretation ... The interpretation of the sacred scriptures is based upon the underlying meaning in the allegorical narratives.” (see Note 71) Thus we see that **what had been striven for in the narrower circle of the Mysteries had become the concern of a community.** But naturally its strict character has been weakened by being shared. — The **communities of the Essenes and Therapeutae form a natural transition from the Mysteries to Christianity. Christianity, however, wished to extend to humanity as a whole what these communities had made the concern of a sect.** This of course prepared the way for a still further weakening of its strict character.

From the existence of such sects it becomes evident how far the time was ripe for the comprehension of the Mystery of Christ. In the Mysteries the neophyte was artificially prepared so that at the suitable stage the higher spiritual world would arise in his soul. Within the community of the Essenes or Therapeutae, by means of a suitable way of life, the soul sought to prepare itself for the awakening of the “higher man.” It is then a further step to struggle through to the intimation that a human individuality might have developed to higher and higher stages of perfection in repeated lives on earth. Anyone who had arrived at such a presentiment of this truth would also be able to feel that in Jesus a being of high spirituality had appeared. The higher the spirituality the greater the possibility of accomplishing something of importance. Thus Jesus' individuality could become capable of accomplishing the deed which is so mysteriously signified in the Gospels by the event of his Baptism by John, and which, by the manner of its presentation, is so clearly marked out as something of the utmost importance. — **The personality of Jesus became able to receive into its own soul Christ, the Logos, so that He became flesh in it.** Since this Incarnation the “Ego” of Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, and the outer personality is the bearer of the Logos. **This event of the “Ego” of Jesus becoming the Christ is represented by the Baptism by John [of the Essenes]. During the time of the Mysteries, “union with the Spirit” was the concern of a few neophytes only. Among the Essenes a whole community cultivated a life by which its members were able to attain this “union;” through the Christ event something, — that is, the deeds of Christ, — was placed before the whole of humanity so that the “union” became a matter of cognition for all mankind.**

My own religious subculture, from early childhood onward, took such liberalization of spiritual consciousness even further. Within the Christian Pentecostal movement, it typically required only a simple desire to “seek the Spirit” (within the supportive company of like-

mindful devotees) for one to begin exhibiting knowledge and abilities far beyond what a single (often depraved) life history could ever hope to achieve. They termed this epiphany a "baptism of the spirit", according to similar accounts of early Christians in the New Testament Acts of the Apostles and writings of Paul to the Corinthian assembly. Latter-century Pentecostals have no conception of baptism in connection with ancient mystery cults nor how the rite was originally used. Indeed, their teachers would be sorely offended by any suggestion of such a heritage.

Lately, Pentecostal and Charismatic groups have been largely mainstreamed, now a less threatening subset of fundamentalist Christianity. Inexplicable "spiritual gifts" are barely in evidence, though remembered (with some embarrassment) as characterizing a less educated, combative and disorganized founding. Few would argue, however that spiritual phenomena --healings, wisdom, insight, miraculous interventions-- are impossible. Many hope and pray for a new "out-pouring" of spiritual power and freedom, a revival of the "old time" Pentecost.

Might the virtual assembly of ASP experiencers --via internet and other publications-- mark just such an outpouring? And the fact that it is disconnected from any traditional spiritual dogma may further indicate its Sovereign Origin, just as the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements transcended all previous denominational boundaries. ASP 'sufferers' come from all levels of society including atheists, strict scientific determinists and spiritualists of all flavors --from fundamental Christians to neo-pagans. We are all stricken, all compelled to seek fellowship of others so challenged, all persuaded to re-evaluate favored cosmologies and embrace the metaphysical as reality --at least a reality parallel to the physical-- in a new way. As seekers of spiritual fact, the ASP community is more seriously reality-oriented than alien abductees, less anecdotal in their research than near-death experiencers, far more culturally diverse and integrated than 'traditional' spiritualists.

Most ASP experiencers do not (yet) profess any consciousness of the Christ Jesus as Prime Initiator of this generation's awakening. To many, this is a repugnant idea, for any variety of reasons. Will these also be compelled to overcome that final bias, just as the experience has already initiated the most unlikely candidates into undreamed levels of spiritual cognition? I suspect so.

The Essence of Christianity

I first read this chapter as a young adult, attempting to reconcile my own ASP experience with a limited worldview, one derived from a childhood influenced by a materialistic and humanistic culture as reflected in the glass of my fundamentalist Christian upbringing. Cultural help was proven unavailing, religious or secular. But Steiner's writing awakened a new realization. I had been regarding, and critically discarding, my spiritual heritage as mere reflection of a spirit-challenged broader culture; when in truth I should have been looking through it as a window (though small and cracked and weather stained) upon the far greater cosmos of being. Steiner's message was actually the same as countless 'salvation testimonies' heard in my youth at church meetings. The Christ came as Jesus, in the nick of time, to demonstrate a new way for any soul to restore fellowship with its Creator, as Son to the Father. His sacrifice, as the one ideal human, in physical/historic death on our behalf, and then His resurrection to super-physical form --this historical-spiritual act changed the eternal equation for us all. A person's ambition of attaining eternal citizenship from within himself --ever an empty, vain enterprise-- is renewed now as hope in the Spirit of Christ re-activating, inspiring new life, new promise and motivation to seek the Father day by day. This promise is given as a living, energizing impetus within each individual who simply chooses to accept the gift and trust in God to accomplish one's ultimate rescue from oblivion. What was lost --deadened, silenced, surrendered as irrecoverable mystery-- now is found to be consciously accessible in Jesus.

I am trying here, in the following edited version of this early pre-war intellectualized translation, to clarify from the complete context of Steiner's presentation his core (essential) Christian message. Most followers of Steiner and Anthroposophy do not yet recognize (as he did) the cosmic and personal centrality of Jesus Christ (His life, sacrifice and resurrection). However, this study should make it clearly evident how and why I felt compelled to get back down upon my Evangelical knees so many years ago.

Note again that bracketed additions and substitutions are based upon Steiner's own commentary in this text. His use here of the term 'personality' means strictly the earth-bound and temporary identity. Every such 'fallen' personality is doomed to pass into forgotten

insignificance, unless it is judged worthy or relevant for the work of furthering advancement of the eternal spiritual soul.

[After Jesus Christ], the Divine --the Word, the eternal Logos-- was no longer [encountered exclusively] on a spiritual plane in the dark secrecy of the Mysteries; but [now] in speaking about the Logos they were indicating the historical and human personality of Jesus. [This fact] must have exercised the deepest influence upon those who acknowledged Christianity. **Previously the Logos had been [observable] only in [gradual humanly achievable stages toward] perfection.** It was possible to observe the delicate, subtle differences in the spiritual life of the [individual] personality and to see in what manner and degree the Logos became living within [those] seeking initiation. A higher degree of maturity [would thereby] be interpreted as a higher stage in the [collective human] evolution of spiritual existence. The preparatory steps [would be observable] in a past spiritual life. And **the present life [would be] regarded as the preparatory stage for future stages of [humanity's] spiritual evolution.** The [continuity of this] spiritual power of the soul and the eternity of that power could be assumed from [teachings such as] the Jewish esoteric (The Zohar), "Nothing in the world is lost, nothing falls into the void, not even the words and voice of man; everything has its place and destination." (see Note 72) The [single] personality was **only a metamorphosis of the [collective] soul** which [appears to change with each successive] personality. The single life of the personality was considered **[relevant] only as a link in the chain** of [trans-mortal] developments reaching forward and backward. Through Christianity [the transformative power of] Logos is [now orchestrated directly by] the [divinely appointed person] of Jesus instead of [inspecifically from an imperfect] individual personality. **What previously had been [diffused generally] throughout the world [of souls striving toward excellence] was now [focussed from within a uniquely perfected personage of earthly history]. Jesus became the unique God-Man.** In Jesus something [was monumentally presented as mankind's] greatest of ideals, [now the one correct ideal challenging and directing the future generations of man's earthly development]. **Jesus took upon himself the apotheosis of the whole of humanity. In him was [to be] sought what formerly could be sought only [imperfectly] in a man's soul.** What had [ideally] been found as divine and eternal in the human personality [had lately] been taken from it [--lost or hidden, no longer any real hope of access or achievement]. And all that was eternal [was transferred to be clearly observable now] in Jesus. **[That eternal part of the soul was never capable through its own power of conquering death to be raised as divine]. But the one God who [became incarnate] in Jesus-- He will appear and raise the souls.**

From this it follows that **an entirely new significance is given to [individual earthly] personality. The eternal, immortal part had been taken from it. Only the [perishable] personality as such was left.** [So now, unless eternity be denied, there must be provided a way to ascribe immortality] to the personality itself. **The belief in the [collective] soul's eternal metamorphosis [was to be replaced by hope] in personal immortality. [By virtue of Jesus Christ] the personality gained infinite importance because it was the only [spiritual thing remaining]**

in man to which he could cling. Henceforth there is [no barrier] between the [temporal] personality and the infinite God. A direct relationship with Him [may now be] established. Man --no longer capable of becoming divine himself in a greater or lesser degree-- was simply man [again like the unfallen Adam, yet now standing as an individual in an outwardly directed] relationship to God.

[Therefore] those who knew the ancient Mystery-conceptions were bound to feel that this brought quite a new note into [their previously privileged] conception of the world. Many people found themselves in this position during the first centuries of Christianity. They knew the [esoteric] nature of the Mysteries; if they wished to become Christians they [yet felt] obliged to [satisfy terms of the old elitist] method. This [presented difficult inner] conflicts. **They tried in the most varied ways to find a balance between these divergent world conceptions. This conflict is reflected in the writings of early Christian times, both of pagans attracted by the sublimity of Christianity and of those Christians who found it hard to give up the ways of the Mysteries.** Christianity [as a world conception] grew slowly [distinct from] Mystery wisdom. On the one hand Christian convictions were presented in the form of the Mystery truths, and on the other the Mystery wisdom was clothed in Christian words.

Clement of Alexandria (died 217 A.D.), a Christian writer whose education had been pagan, provides an instance of this: “Thus the Lord did not hinder us from doing good while keeping the Sabbath, but allowed us to communicate of those divine mysteries, and of that holy light, to those who are able to receive them. He did not disclose to the many what did not belong to the many; but to the few to whom he knew that they belonged, who were capable of receiving and being molded according to them. But secret things are entrusted to speech, not to writing, as God confided the unutterable mystery to the Logos, not to the written word.”

[And here an opposing example from the New Testament epistle:] “God gave to the church some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (see Note 73)

By the most diverse means personalities tried to find [one admissible departure] from ancient conceptions to [embrace instead] the Christian ones. And each of them, believing he was on the right path, called the others heretics. **[Meanwhile, opposite these elitist controversies], the Church grew stronger as an external institution. The more [influence] it gained the more a path recognized as the right one by decisions of councils took the place of [personalized opinion].** It was [proper then] for the Church [leadership] to decide who deviated too far from the divine truth which it guarded. **The concept of a “heretic” took firmer and firmer shape.** During the first centuries of Christianity the search for the divine path was a much more [personalized] matter than it became later. A long distance had to be traveled before Augustine's conviction could become possible: “I should not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church.” (see Note in Chapter 6)

The conflict between the [approach] of the [ancient] Mysteries and that of the Christian religion [was specially characterized by] the various “Gnostic” sects

and writers. We may class as Gnostics all the writers of the first Christian centuries who sought for a deeper spiritual sense in Christian teachings. (A brilliant account of the development of Gnosis is given in G. R. S. Mead's book mentioned above, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*.) [One can best] understand the Gnostics when [viewed] as saturated with the ancient wisdom of the Mysteries and striving to understand Christianity from that point of view. **For them Christ is the Logos. [As such] His nature is principally spiritual.** In His primal essence He cannot approach man [safely] from without. Christ must be awakened in the soul. [However] the historical Jesus must bear some relationship to this spiritual Logos. This was the crucial question for the Gnostics. Some settled it in one way, some in another. The essential point common to them all-- [in order] **to arrive at a true understanding of the Christ-idea, mere historical tradition was not sufficient. [Real understanding, "gnosis",] must be sought either in the wisdom of the Mysteries or in the Neoplatonic philosophy** which was derived from the same source. The Gnostics [placed] faith in human wisdom, and believed it capable of bringing forth a Christ by whom the historical Christ could be measured. In fact, [they would propose **only through such wisdom**] **could the [historical Jesus as Christ] be understood and beheld in the right light.**

From this point of view the doctrine [presented] in **the books of Dionysius the Areopagite** is of special interest. It is true that there is no mention of these writings until the sixth century. But it matters little when and where [the teachings were actually written down]; the point is that they **give an account of Christianity which is clothed in the language of Neoplatonic philosophy, and presented in the form of a spiritual vision of the higher world.** In any case this is a [written] **form of [verbal] presentation belonging to the first Christian centuries.** In olden times this presentation was handed on in the form of oral tradition; in fact the most important things were not entrusted to writing. Christianity thus presented could be regarded as reflected in the mirror of the Neoplatonic world conception, [as follows] .

[Given that] **sense-perception dims man's spiritual vision,** he must [somehow] go beyond the material world. [Yet the **first problem remains, that**] **all human concepts are derived primarily from observation by the senses.** What man observes with his senses he calls existent; **what he [cannot] so observe he calls non-existent.** Therefore if he wishes to open up **an actual view of the divine he must [transcend] existence and non-existence,** for as he conceives them these [concepts] also have their origin in the sphere of the senses. In this sense **God is neither existent nor non-existent. He is super-existent.** Consequently He cannot be attained by means of ordinary perception, which has to do with existing things. We must be raised above ourselves, above our sense-observation, above our reasoning logic if we are to find the bridge to spiritual conception; then we are able to get a glimpse into the perspectives of the divine.

But **this super-existent divinity has brought forth the Logos, the foundation of the universe, filled with wisdom.** Man's lower powers are [thereby] able to reach Him. **He is present in the [form and design] of the world as the spiritual Son of God; He is the mediator between God and man. He may [even be found]**

present in man [at various stages of development]. He may [also, for instance], be realized in an external institution, in which those variously imbued with His spirit are grouped into a hierarchy. A “Church” of this kind is [another] material reality of the Logos, and the power which lives in it [first] lived personally in the Christ become flesh, in Jesus. Thus **through Jesus the Church is united to God; in Him lies its meaning and [ultimate authority].**

One thing was clear to all Gnosis: one [cannot escape] the idea of Jesus as a [distinct] personality. Christ and Jesus [the man] must be brought into relationship with each other. Divinity was taken from human personality and must be recovered in one way or another. It must be possible to find it again in Jesus. The [ancient] mystic was [previously] dealing with a degree of divinity [still remaining] within himself, and [then relating that to] his own earthly material personality. [Subsequently,] **the Christian was dealing with the personality [only -- any other spiritual part being lost or hidden from him--] and also with a perfect God [externally] far above all that is humanly attainable.** If [one were to hold now] to this conception, [then] **a fundamentally mystical [outlook is no longer possible ... Unless the soul were enabled again to find] the higher spiritual element in itself,** its spiritual eye opened so that the light issuing from the Christ in Jesus falls upon it. [Thereafter] union of the soul with its highest powers is at the same time union with the historical Christ. For mysticism [requires knowledge to be] a direct feeling and experience of the divine within the soul. But a God far transcending everything human can never dwell in the soul in [the previous sense of mystical pursuit]. **Gnosis and all subsequent Christian mysticism represent the effort in one way or another to [regain] hold of that God and to apprehend Him directly in the soul. A conflict in this case was inevitable.** In reality it was [never possible for a man to find more than] his own divine part; but this is a human-divine part, that is, a divine part at a certain stage of development. Yet the Christian God is [distinct], perfect in Himself. It was possible [once for a select person] to find in himself the power to strive upward to this God, but he could [never claim truly that such experience proved his own soul, at any stage of development, could be] one with God. **[This gulf now appeared clearly between what the soul was able to perceive] and what Christianity described as divine. It is the gulf between knowledge [gnosis] and belief, between cognition [as experience] and religious feeling.** This gulf [did not appear to] exist for a mystic in the old sense of the word. He [understood that he could] comprehend the divine only by degrees, and he also knew why this was so. It was clear to him that this gradual attainment [would be the only] real attainment of the true, living divinity and he found it difficult [thereby to acknowledge] a perfect, isolated divine principle. **A mystic of [old] kind does not wish to recognize a perfect God, [however much] he wishes to experience the divine life. He wishes [rather] to become divine himself; he does not wish to gain an external relationship to the Godhead.**

It is of the essence of **Christianity, by contrast,** that its mysticism [seeking experience of God] **starts with [a new] assumption. The Christian mystic seeks to behold divinity within himself, but he must look to the historical Christ as**

his eyes do to the sun; just as the physical eye says to itself, By means of the sun I see what I have power to see, so the Christian mystic says to himself, **I will [awaken and enliven] my innermost being [as divinely inspired] vision, and the light which makes such vision possible [is enabled by the very] Christ who [appeared on Earth]. [Because] He is, I am able to rise to the highest within myself.** In this the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages [finally] show how they differ from the mystics of the ancient Mysteries. (See my book, *Die Mystik im Aufgange des neuzeitlichen Geisteslebens*. Berlin, 1901, *Mysticism at the Dawn of the Modern Age*, Englewood, New Jersey, 1960, Volume 3 of the Centennial Edition of the Written Works of Rudolf Steiner, 1861–1961.)

Christianity and Pagan Wisdom

AT THE TIME of the first beginnings of Christianity, there appear in ancient **pagan culture conceptions** of the world which seem to be **[also] a continuation of the Platonic way of thinking**, and which may be understood as a more inward, spiritual Mystery wisdom. Such conceptions started with Philo of Alexandria (B.C. 25–A.D. 50). (see Note 46) From his point of view the processes leading to the divine take place in the innermost part of the human soul. One could say that **the mystery temple in which Philo seeks his initiations is simply and solely the innermost part of his being, and its higher experiences.** In his case **processes of a purely spiritual nature replace the procedures which took place in the Mystery centers.** According to Philo **sense-observation and cognition gained through the logical intellect, do not lead to the divine.** They relate merely to what is transitory. But there is a path by which **the soul** may rise above these methods of cognition. It **must step out of what it accepts as its ordinary “I.”** It must be removed from this “I.” **Then it enters a state of spiritual exaltation and illumination in which it no longer knows, thinks and cognizes in the ordinary sense. For it has become merged with the divine, identified with it.** The divine is experienced in its essence, which cannot be formed in thoughts or imparted in concepts. It is experienced. One who experiences it knows that he can communicate this experience only if he is able to imbue his words with life. The world is a reflected image of this mystical reality, experienced in the innermost recesses of the soul. The world has come forth from the invisible, inconceivable God. **A direct image of this Godhead is the wisdom-filled harmony of the world, out of which material phenomena arise.** This wisdom-filled harmony is the spiritual image of the Godhead. **It is the divine Spirit diffused in the world; cosmic reason, the Logos, the Offspring or Son of God.** The Logos is the mediator between the world of the senses and the inconceivable God. **When man steeps himself in cognition, he unites himself with the Logos.** The Logos becomes embodied in him. The spiritually developed personality is the bearer of the Logos. **Above the Logos is God; beneath is the transitory world. Man is called upon to link the two. What he experiences in his innermost being as spirit, is the cosmic Spirit.** These ideas are directly reminiscent of Pythagorean thought. (see Note in Chapter 3) — **The center of existence is sought in the inner life. But this inner life is conscious of its cosmic significance.** Augustine's statement, “We see all created things because

they are; and they are because God sees them,” derives from a way of thinking essentially similar to that of Philo. — And in describing what and how we see, Augustine adds significantly, “Because they are, we see them outwardly: and because they are perfect, we see them inwardly.” (see Note 73a) We find the same fundamental idea in Plato (see Note in Chapter 4). **Philo, like Plato, sees in the destiny of the human soul the closing act of the great cosmic drama, the awakening of the spellbound God.** He describes the inner deeds of the soul in the following words: **The wisdom within man followed “the ways of his Father, and shaped the different forms, looking to the archetypal patterns.” It is not [merely] a personal matter when man shapes such forms within himself. These forms are the eternal wisdom, they are the cosmic life.**

There is much discussion among ASP experiencers as to the What and Wherefrom of entities encountered, especially those character forms seen apparently in common –such as the Grim Reaper or Dark Man, the Old Hag, the beastlike Incubus, the threatening noncorporeal Presence, and others. Assuming that some proportion of alien abduction experiences may be ASP, the Reptilian or Grey beings have certainly taken mythical proportions in terms of collective consciousness. Perhaps other folk figures are similarly conceived, such as gnomes, elves, faerie, genie, djinn, the raven, coyote and other cultural varieties of demons or mischievous spirits. Many of us have tentatively concluded that these creatures are actually somehow born of our own souls; however they become shared in common as standardized forms or archetypes of another reality.

This is in harmony with the interpretation of the folk myths in the light of the Mysteries. **The mystic searches for the deeper truth in the [pagan] myths** (see Note in Chapter 5). And as the mystic treats the myths of paganism, Philo [likewise] handles Moses' story of the creation. For him the Old Testament accounts are images of inner soul processes. The Bible relates the creation of the world. Whoever accepts it as a description of outer events, knows only half of it. Certainly it is written, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” But the true inner sense of such words must be experienced in the depths of the soul. God must be found within; then He appears as the “archetypal essence sending forth myriads of rays, none visible to sense, all to the mind.” (see Note 74) This is how Philo expresses himself. In Plato's *Timaeus* the words are almost identical with those of the Bible: “And when the Father that engendered the universe perceived it in motion and alive, and a thing of joy to the eternal gods, He too rejoiced.” (see Note 75) In the Bible we read, “and God saw that it was good.” — For Plato, **for Mystery wisdom**, as well as for the Bible, **cognition of the divine means to experience the process of creation as one's own destiny.** Thus the story of creation and the story of the soul

striving toward its apotheosis, flow into one. **Philo is convinced that Moses' account of the creation may be used to tell the story of the soul which is seeking God.** Everything in the Bible acquires a profoundly symbolic meaning when seen from this point of view. Philo becomes the interpreter of this symbolic meaning. He reads the Bible as the story of the soul.

We may say that **Philo's manner of reading the Bible is in harmony with the trend of his time, which originated in the wisdom of the Mysteries;** indeed he relates that the Therapeutae interpreted ancient writings in the same way. "They have also works of ancient authors who were the founders of their way of thinking, and left behind them many monuments of the method used in allegorical interpretation ... the interpretation of the sacred scriptures is based upon the underlying meaning in the allegorical narratives." (see Note in Chapter 10). Thus **Philo's goal was to discover the underlying meaning of the "allegorical" narratives in the Old Testament.**

Let us imagine where such an interpretation could lead. We read the account of creation, and find in it **not only a narrative of outward events**, but a representation of the ways which the soul must take to reach the divine. Thus **as a microcosm**, the soul must repeat in itself the ways of God, and its mystical striving for wisdom can take only this form. **The drama of the universe must be enacted in every soul.** The soul life of the mystic is the fulfillment of the prototype given in the account of creation. **Moses wrote not only to recount historical facts, but to represent pictorially the ways the soul must take if it desires to find God.**

This approach to scripture, though very comfortable and familiar to an Evangelical Christian, must feel strange and nonsensical to others. This mode of thinking (consciously and personally experiencing a story) becomes a habitual approach to other story forms such as the fable, fairy tale, and even history. This is common, of course, as entertainment and even as a sort of imagination therapy, as in fascination for horror movies. But what of embracing such imaginations in course of serious devotion to character development on a spiritual level, and unabashedly? This is seen as alien, unnatural, excessive and unhealthy obsession with unreal or unprovable metaphysical fantasies.

All this, in Philo's conception of the world, is contained within the human spirit. **Man experiences within himself what God has experienced in the world.**

Perhaps it should also be said that I --as a transitory personality-- am a player in God's Imaginative Creation of the material world. I stand before God in a way similar to how my own dream characters (including my dream-self) are related to me, my daytime self. ASP is

fundamentally distinct from a dream-life, as that relationship actually feels reversed. The day-self begins therein as the very same; this suddenly disembodied self-consciousness is a continuation of my daytime consciousness. And the longer I dwell there --growing accustomed to an immaterial body and super-material environment-- the more my prior day-me is diminished, become dimly dreamlike.

The Word of God, the Logos, becomes an experience of the soul. God led the Jews out of Egypt into the Promised Land; He made them undergo trials and privations before bestowing the Promised Land upon them. This is the outward event. Let us experience it inwardly. **From the land of Egypt, the transitory world, passing through privations which lead to the suppression of sensuous experience and into the promised land of the soul, we reach the eternal. With Philo all this is an inner process.** The God Who was poured out into the world, celebrates His resurrection in the soul, if His creative word is understood and re-created in the soul. **Then within himself, man has given spiritual birth to God, to the Spirit of God that became Man, to the Logos, to Christ.** In this sense, cognition, for Philo and those who thought like him, was a birth of Christ within the world of spirit. **The Neoplatonic conception of the world, which developed contemporaneously with Christianity, was a continuation of Philo's method of thought.** Let us see how Plotinus (204–269 A.D.) describes his spiritual experience:

“Many times it has happened: **Lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-centered; beholding a marvelous beauty;** then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine; rooted within it; attaining the strength to set myself above the higher world: **yet, there comes the moment of descent from spiritual vision to reasoning,** and after that reposing in God, **I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending, and how did my soul ever enter into my body,** the soul which, in its essence, is the high thing it has shown itself to be,” and “What can it be that has brought the souls **to forget the Father, God,** and, though members of the Divine and entirely of that world, to ignore at once themselves and it? **The evil that has overtaken them has its source in self-will, in the entry into the sphere of creation,** and in the primal differentiation with **the desire for self-ownership.** They conceived a pleasure in this freedom and largely indulged in their own self-glorification; thus they were hurried down the wrong path, and in the end, drifting further and further, they **came to lose even the thought of their origin in the Divine. Just as children who are immediately torn from their parents, and have for a long time been nurtured at a great distance from them, become ignorant both of themselves and their parents.**” (see Note 76) In the following words Plotinus describes the **path of development the soul should seek:** “Let not merely the enveloping body be at peace, the body's turmoil stilled, but all that lies around; earth at peace, and sea at peace, and air and the very heavens be still. **Let the soul be observed, externally as it were,**

diffusing and flowing into the quiescent cosmos, permeating it from all sides, and pouring in its light. As the rays of the sun, throwing their brilliance upon a lowering cloud make it gleam all gold, so **the soul entering body of the heaven-opened world, bestows life and immortality.**" (see Note 77)

It follows that **this conception of the world has a profound similarity to Christianity.**

Also an obvious resemblance to ASP: I have described it elsewhere as a feeling suddenly of being numbed, mind and body, as if by a drug -- not the sojourn out-of-body, rather the abrupt return to physical bodyhood. I would add the words anticlimactic, frustrating and stifling of ultimate joy.

Among those who acknowledge the community of Jesus it is said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... declare we unto you." (I John 1: 1–3.) In the same way it might be said in the sense of Neoplatonism, that which was from the beginning, which cannot be heard or seen, must be spiritually experienced as the word of life. — The development of the old world conception thus is split. In Neoplatonism and similar conceptions of the world it leads to a concept of Christ related only to the spiritual realm, and on the other hand it leads to a fusion of this concept of Christ with a historical manifestation, the personality of Jesus. **The writer of the Gospel of John may be said to unite these two world conceptions. "In the beginning was the Word."** He shares this conviction with the Neoplatonists. **The Neoplatonists conclude that the Word becomes spirit in the innermost soul. The writer of John's Gospel, and with him the community of Christians, conclude that the Word became flesh in Jesus.** The more intimate sense, in which alone the Word could become flesh was provided by the whole development of the old world conceptions. **Plato says of the Macrocosm: God has stretched the soul of the world on the body of the world in the form of a cross.** (see Note 77a) **This soul of the world is the Logos. If the Logos is to become flesh He must repeat the cosmic process in physical existence. He must be nailed to the Cross and rise again. This most significant thought of Christianity had long before been outlined as a spiritual representation in the old world conceptions. This became a personal experience of the mystic during "initiation."**

And so must I accept every morning, after every sojourn beyond physical bounds, that I as a living soul must bear the cross in the form of a physical body stretched out and fastened by iron-enriched blood to these aging, hardening bones... Until that final morning when the burden may be forever laid down.

The Logos become Man had to experience this deed as a fact, valid for the whole of humanity. Something which was a Mystery process in the development of the old wisdom becomes historical fact through Christianity. Thus Christianity became the fulfillment not only of what the Jewish prophets had predicted, but also of what had been pre-formed in the Mysteries.

The Cross of Golgotha is the Mystery cult of antiquity condensed into a fact. We find the Cross first in the ancient world conceptions; at the starting-point of Christianity it meets us within a unique event which is to be valid for the whole of humanity. From this point of view the mystical element in Christianity can be grasped. **Christianity as mystical fact is a stage of development in the process of human evolution; and the events in the Mysteries and their effects are the preparations for this mystical fact.**

Augustine and the Church

THE FULL FORCE of the conflict which was enacted in the souls of Christian believers during the transition from paganism to the new religion is shown in the person of Augustine (354–430). When we see how this conflict has become resolved in the spirit of Augustine we are enabled in a mysterious way to penetrate the spiritual struggles of Origin, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Jerome and others.

Augustine was a personality in whom deep spiritual needs developed out of a passionate nature. **He passed through pagan and half-Christian ideas.** He suffered deeply from the most dreadful doubts which can attack a man who has felt the impotence of many varieties of thought in the face of spiritual problems, and who has **tasted the depressing effect of the question, Can man know anything at all?**

This, I submit, is the crux of every spiritual quest. Whether ASP or grief, fear of death, scientific uncertainty or the global struggle to protect basic human rights-- resolution finally hinges on this Cartesian question: How do I know that I know. I would even distill it further to ask, how do I know that I am; indeed that I really am such a being as can know anything for a certainty. Therefore, agnostics may seem to be the most intellectually honest; except that they tend to restrict their skepticism to things spiritual. The religious agnostic has ceased seeking truth as a supposed spiritual reality, while presupposing uncritically that things material are inherently real. This despite all published social and physical scientific challenges of the materialistic-positivistic worldview. Material things are scientifically established lately in fact as 'not what they appear to be'. Our common-sense conception of solid matter is utterly bankrupt. All that remains then is 'faith' in what I believe to be operational... Faith to carry on as mere

physical beings in a material world; trusting that things will behave predictably as they appear and just long enough, even reliably enough to fulfill a lifetime. Beyond that is faith to continue seeking in the hope that physical existence isn't the sum total of my existence. This persistent and troubling notion that I am --like every other material appearance— rooted in a super-material dimension of reality: Just tell me, where did this ancient idea come from? Why is it shared cross-culturally and trans-generationally only among human-kind? Why doesn't it go away, even with the realization of material or political successes? Where is the physio-evolutionary advantage of such a pursuit? I answer that only faith-driven inquiry into a spiritual evolution can begin to engage all those concerns.

So I continue to seek, considering agnosticism a weak excuse intellectually to remain a materialist; though many would maintain they are spiritualists nonetheless. I should be motivated to pursue spiritual development, regardless. However, my continued experience of Awareness during Sleep Paralysis further compels me to seek spiritual assurances. The only way to endure ASP is to presume first that “I am”; second to maintain the hope that I can know what and who are truly real, even if that means faith in the prime reality of something and Someone materially unseen, physically unverifiable. That is the significance of having experienced Awareness of Self, Thinking, Perceiving --in a word, Logos-- while divorced from all physical sensations. As an accidental spiritual scientist, I believe that I have discovered my Mind, for brief sessions, transcending the necessary limits of a physical brain. And it is a profoundly humbling realization. Like God, I am that I am, even when physically I am naught.

At the beginning of his struggles Augustine's thoughts clung to the transitory things of the material world. He could conceive of the spiritual only in material images. It is a deliverance for him when he rises above this stage. He describes this in his Confessions: "When I desired to think upon my God, I knew not how to think of Him except as a mass of bodies, for what was not of such a nature seemed to me to be nothing. This was the greatest and almost the only cause of my (see Note 78) inevitable error." Thus he indicates the point which a person is bound to reach who is seeking the true life in the spirit. There are thinkers — and they are not few — who maintain that it is impossible to arrive at pure thought, free from any material substance. These thinkers confuse what they believe they ought to say about their own soul life with what is humanly possible. On the contrary, **the truth is that it is only possible to arrive at higher cognition when thought has been freed from all material substance; when a soul life has been developed in which images of reality do not cease when their demonstration in sense-impressions**

comes to an end. Augustine relates **how he achieved spiritual vision.** Everywhere he **asked where the "divine" was to be found.** "I asked the earth and it said, I am not He; and all things that are in the earth confessed the same. I asked the ocean and the depths and all that lives in them, and they answered me: We are not thy God. Seek above us. I asked the fleeting winds, and the whole air, with all its inhabitants made answer: The philosophers who seek for the essence of things in us are deceived. We are not God. I asked the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, and they said: Neither are we the God whom thou seekest." (see Note 79) And **Augustine perceived that there is but one thing which can answer** his question about the divine: **his own soul.** The soul said, No eyes nor ears can impart to you what is in me. **for I alone can tell you, and I tell you in such a way that doubt is impossible.** "Men may doubt whether vital force lives in air or in fire, but who can doubt that he himself lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows and judges? If he doubts, it is a proof that he is alive, he remembers why he doubts, he understands that he doubts, he will assure himself of something, he thinks, he knows that he knows nothing, he judges that he must not accept anything hastily." (see Note 80) **External things do not defend themselves when their essence and existence are denied. But the soul does defend itself. It could not be doubtful of itself unless it existed. By its doubt it confirms its own existence.** "We are and we perceive our existence and we love our own existence and cognition. On these three points *no error disguised as truth can trouble us, for we do not apprehend them with our bodily senses like physical things.*" (see Note 81) **Man learns about the divine by bringing his soul to perceive itself as spiritual in order that it may find its way as spirit into the spiritual world.**

I had to reread this passage several times, not to understand but to celebrate the import of Augustine's confession. Herein is the heart of spiritual salvation, as well as Heaven's case against the 'sin' of disbelief. I have no excuse for failing to admit of the spirit and my accountability before God as a spiritual being. I practice spiritual cognition every day, every waking or dreaming moment in my own inner dialogue, every intercourse with my own soul --the one undeniable fact of existence that will not be verified empirically.

No soul can deny that he holds dearly to spiritual converse, to perceptions of his own personal spiritual kingdom --just as dreams and fairy tales reflect. Further proof of this fact is apparent precisely whenever a soul attempts to question spiritual reality, even to doubt its own experience. My consciousness is illusory? The very act of posing such a question begs itself. The soul, by definition, defends itself against such self-doubt.

So why do people of this era persist to entertain existentialist agnosticism? Perhaps it is the striving of Christ's archenemies against each other. One Enemy would deny all individual inner life, absorbing

all selves into His own collective soul. The rival Enemy wants to bury all inner experience, extinguish spiritual thought and perceptions, except for those consumable drives and desires attached to material bodies.

Augustine had struggled through to this perception. Out of such an attitude of mind grew the desire in pagan personalities seeking cognition, to knock at the portal of the Mysteries. **In the age of Augustine such convictions could lead a man to become a Christian. Jesus, the Logos become man, had shown the path which must be followed by the soul if it would attain the goal of which it must speak when in communion with itself.** In 358 at Milan Augustine received the teachings of Ambrose. All his doubts about the Old and New Testaments vanished when the most important passages were interpreted by his teacher, not in a merely literal sense, but "were spiritually laid open and expounded by him, the mystical veil thereof being removed." (see Note 82) **What had been guarded in the Mysteries was embodied for Augustine in the historical tradition of the Gospels and in the community where that tradition was preserved.** By degrees he comes to a conviction regarding Church doctrine, of which he says, "I felt it was with moderation and honesty that it commanded things to be believed that were not demonstrated." He arrives at the idea, "Who could be so blind as to say that the Church of the Apostles deserves to have no faith placed in it, when it is so loyal and is supported by the conformity of so many brethren; when these have handed down their writings to posterity so conscientiously, and when the Church has so strictly maintained the succession of teachers down to our present bishops?" (see Note 83) **Augustine's method of thinking told him that since the Christ event other conditions had begun for souls seeking the spirit in place of those which had existed previously. For him it was firmly established that in Christ Jesus there had been revealed in the outer historical world what the mystic had sought through preparation in the Mysteries.** One of his most significant utterances is the following: "What is now called the Christian religion already existed among the ancients, and was not lacking at the very beginnings of the human race. **When Christ appeared in the flesh, the true religion already in existence received the name of Christian.**" (see Note 84) **Two paths of development were possible for such a mode of thinking. One is that if the human soul develops within it the forces leading it to the cognition of its true self, if it but goes far enough, it will also come to cognition of the Christ and of everything connected with him. This would have been a Mystery knowledge enriched through the Christ event.** The other way is that actually taken by Augustine, by which he became the great example for his successors. It consists in cutting off the development of the forces of the soul at a certain point and in receiving the ideas connected with the Christ event from written accounts and oral traditions. **Augustine rejected the first way as springing from pride of soul; he thought the second way was the way of true humility.** Thus he says to those who wished to follow the first way: "You may find peace in the truth, but for this, humility is needed, which does not suit your proud neck." (see Note 85) On the other hand he was filled with boundless inward happiness by the fact that since the "appearance of Christ in the flesh" it was

possible to say that **experience of the spiritual can be attained by every soul** which goes as far as it can in seeking within itself, **and then, in order to reach the highest, has faith in what the written and oral traditions of the community of Christians tell about the Christ** and his revelation. On this point he says: "What bliss, what abiding enjoyment of supreme and true good is offered to us, what serenity, what a breath of eternity! How shall I describe it? It has been expressed, as far as it could be, by those great incomparable souls who we admit have beheld and still behold ... We reach a point at which we acknowledge how true is what we have been commanded to believe and how well and beneficently we have been brought up by our mother the Church, and of what benefit was the milk given by the Apostle Paul to the little ones ..." (see Note 86) (It is beyond the scope of this book to give an account of the alternative method of thinking which is evolved from the Mystery knowledge enriched through the Christ event. The description of this method will be found in my outline of a *Geheimwissenschaft*.) — Whereas in pre-Christian times one who wished to seek the spiritual foundations of existence was necessarily directed to the way of the Mysteries, Augustine was able to say, even to those souls who could find no such path within themselves: Go as far as you can on the path of cognition with your human powers; from there, faith (belief) will carry you up into the higher spiritual regions. — It was only going one step further to say: **It is in the nature of the human soul to be able to arrive only at a certain stage of cognition through its own powers; from there it can advance further only through faith, through belief in the written and oral tradition.** This step was taken by the spiritual movement which assigned to natural perception a certain sphere above which the soul could not rise by its own efforts, but everything which lay beyond this sphere was made an object of belief which has to be supported by written and oral tradition, and by faith in its representatives. **Thomas Aquinas** (1224–1274), the greatest teacher of the Church, has **set forth this doctrine** in the most varied ways in his writings. **Human perception can only attain to that which led Augustine to self-knowledge, to the certainty of the divine. The nature of the divine and its relation to the world is given by revealed theology, which is not accessible to man's own perception, and as an article of faith, is superior to all cognition.**

The origin of this point of view may be observed in the world conception of John Scotus Erigena, who lived in the ninth century at the court of Charles the Bald, and who represents a natural transition from early Christianity to the point of view of Thomas Aquinas. His conception of the world is expressed in the sense of Neoplatonism. In his treatise, *De Divisione Naturae*, Erigena has elaborated the teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite. This teaching started with a God far above the transitory things of the material world and it derived the world from Him. (see Note in Chapter 11) Man is involved in the transformation of all beings toward this God, Who finally attains to what He was from the beginning. Everything falls back again into the Godhead which has passed through the universal process and finally has become perfected. But in order to reach this goal man must find the way to the Logos who became flesh. In Erigena this thought leads to another, that **faith in the content** of the writings which give an account of the Logos, leads to salvation.

Reason **and the authority of the Scriptures**, belief and cognition, stand side by side. The one does not contradict the other, but **faith must bring that to which knowledge alone can never raise itself.**

The cognition of the eternal which the ancient Mysteries withheld from the multitudes, when presented in this way by Christian thought and feeling, became an article of faith which by its very nature was related to something unattainable by mere knowledge. **It was the conviction of the pre-Christian mystic that to him was given cognition of the divine, and to the people, a faith expressed in imagery. Christianity came to the conviction that God has given His wisdom to mankind through His revelation, and man attains an image of the divine revelation through his cognition.** The wisdom of the Mysteries is a hot-house plant which is revealed to a few mature individuals; **Christian wisdom is a Mystery revealed as cognition to none, but as an article of faith it is revealed to all.** In Christianity the viewpoint of the Mysteries lived on. But it lived on in an altered form. All, not only the special individual, were to share in the truth. But it should so happen that at a certain point man perceived his inability to penetrate further by means of cognition, and from there on ascended to faith. **Christianity brought the content of the Mysteries out of the darkness of the temple into the clear light of day.** The one spiritual stream within Christianity outlined here led to the idea that **this content must necessarily be retained in the form of faith.**